

THE DOCTRINE OF AL-JUNAYD

INTRODUCTION

The starting point of the religious feeling of the sufi is the sense of the tremendous distance between man and God. This fundamental feeling prevails throughout the consciousness of the sufi. Sometimes it seems as if this fundamental consciousness were a distinct dualism and, even if it is not dualism, there always remains the feeling of the gulf between the powerless human being and the omnipotent God.

The sufis are always aware of this, and the positive supplement of this feeling is their longing to bridge the gap by striving to transcend the gulf.

If we ask what is the means whereby the sufis can overcome the distance realized by them between man and God, we will first of all receive the answer: It is (Mysticism). They may differ in their definitions of Tasawwuf, in ways of life, in expressions, in the emphasis they may put on this or that, and thus they may vary and come to different conclusions. But the fundamental feeling and the aim are the same.

If we now endeavour to trace and follow up al-Junayd's teaching, we ought first of all to give his definition of Tasawwuf, which will open to us the door to what is in his mind and which will allow us to see his ultimate aim.

Many of his definitions of Tasawwuf have come down to us, such as the following two:

" Tasawwuf is to be with God without attachment to ought else."

" Tasawwuf is an attempt wherein man abides." Al-Junayd was asked; " Is it an attribute of God or of man? " and his reply was; " In essence it is an attribute of God, but by image it is an attribute of man."

The first definition means that to bridge the gulf is to detach oneself from everything else and to be with God.

The second definition means: in the state where the gulf is bridged, the sufi realizes that his own attributes are in reality

attributes of God, and so his own attributes vanish. He realizes that all attributes of man are only attributes in image in a secondary and derived sense but that they are in reality attributes of God. Or, in other words, as Hujwiri explains this definition of al-Junayd: " In real Unification (Tawhid) there are, correctly speaking, no human attributes at all, because human attributes are not constant but are only in image and imprint (rasm), having no permanence, for God is the agent. Therefore, they are really the attributes of God.

This state of the sufi which Junayd means is described by him in one of his letters as follows:

" In this state of absolute purity he has lost his personal attributes; by this loss he is wholly present (in God). By being wholly present in God, he is wholly lost to himself. And thus he is present before God while absent in himself; absent and present at the same time. He is where he is now, and he is not where he is."

To define it in one word the state described in this letter is Tawhid. The Muwahhid, the man who has reached Unification, could not fully realize that God is One, except by losing himself in the Oneness of God.

Thus we meet here the Doctrine of Tawhid, Divine Unification, which is the centre of al-Junayd's experience and teachings.

This experience of his carried him probably far beyond the frame given by traditional religion. Facing the fundamental Moslem dogma, which by the will of God places the believer in the midst of the community, he was well aware of the very danger of this state experienced and taught by him.

His experience, as we find, carried him to a further state which he describes in a second doctrine. He continues in the same letter:

" Then, after he has not been, he is where he had been (sc. before creation). He is himself, after he has not been really himself. He is present in himself and in God, after having been present in God and absent in himself. This is

because he has left the intoxication of God's overwhelming, Ghalaba, and come to the clarity of sobriety, Sahw, and contemplation is once more restored to him, so that he can
Thus we meet al-Junayd's essential doctrine of Sobriety, which the majority of sufis at this time accepted. The Qur'an and Sunna were proclaimed to be the standard to which not only speculation, but also spiritual feelings and states must conform. Al-Junayd's moral personality was able to save him from the dangers into which some of his successors fell. These two doctrines the " Doctrine of Divine Unity," Tawhid, and the " Doctrine of Sobriety," Sahw are the two main pillars which support the structure of al-Junayd's mysticism, of which we shall now try to give a fuller survey and interpretation.

THE DOCTRINE OF UNIFICATION

During al-Junayd's lifetime, in the third century a.h., the Doctrine of the Unity of God was particularly discussed by all religious groups, especially by the Mu'tazila, who had great authority at this time. They were, in fact, called the " People of Tawhid" they treated this question and approached the Oneness of God through the means of reason, and arrived at conclusions of a complex nature.

The sufis, on the other hand, being dissatisfied with reason and its results, strove to experience the Unity of God by way of feeling and revelation. Thus Ibn al-Katib, a sufi of the fourth century, says; " The Mu'tazila have practised the tanzih, the remotio of God from attributing to Him any imperfect qualities, by reason (aql), and have gone with this the wrong way. The sufis have practised it through 'ilm, revealed knowledge, and have hit the right way." Ibn al-Katib compared in this way the method of the sufis with the method of the Mu'tazila and shed light on their respective views on the Unity of God. So we see

that the sufis, amongst whom al-Junayd stands out as a central figure, were in complete harmony with the spirit of the age in dealing with the same essential problem, as the others.

The sufis maintain that the Unity of God is indefinable.

Al-Junayd says; " The noblest saying referring to Tawhid is the word of Abu Bakr; ' Praise be to God, Who has vouchsafed to His creatures no other means of obtaining Knowledge of Him except through their impotence to attain Knowledge of Him.' This certainly shows that, according to al-Junayd, Tawhid is far beyond the sphere of any intellectual cognition. The same is probably the meaning of these words of al-Junayd: " Tawhid is a reality in which the traces disappear and the signs fade away, and God is as He always was." More clearly he expresses the same thing in other words: " If the understanding of understanding has ended in the Tawhid, it ends in fixity." On an occasion when he attempted to speak of the Tawhid, he merely expressed it by several descriptions illustrating certain characteristics of it, because, as he stated when he was asked for an explanation: " It is an idea (ma'na) the definition of which cannot be defined, despite the vast and complete knowledge contained therein." In fact, all sufis are aware of this and realize their own incapacity to put Tawhid into words and explain it in speaking, and the impossibility of fathoming it by reason.

If we seek now to explore the essence of Tawhid according to the s is more closely, we find the result is somewhat meagre.

"We first give the summing-up of al-Qushayri;

" Tawhid has a threefold meaning;

(1) ' Tawhid of God as subject with regard to God as object in His knowledge that He is unique and His assertion of Himself that He is One.'

(2) ' Tawhid of God as subject with regard to man as object in His assertion that man is a confessor of Unity and His creating the power of confession of Unity in man.'

(3) ' Tawhid of the created being as subject with regard to

God as object, is the knowledge of man that God is unique and his judgment and assertion about Him that He is unique.'

If this were the whole Tawhid of the sufis, one would not really know much about the distinctive sufi element in it.

Dhu'n Nun al-Misri defines Tawhid as follows; " Tawhid is that you know that God's omnipotence in the calling into being of anything does not result necessarily from a natural power, and that His creation goes on without instrument; that the cause of all things is His creation which has no cause and that everything of which you, yourself, may form a conception is a thing, so that God is different from it." This signifies purely dogmatic confession of Unity with an anti-Mu'tazilite colouring. Both these definitions are clear and truthful, but they lack the particular sufi approach.

Only al-Junayd seems to have had a capacity for a more intimate approach to the conception of Tawhid in its specific significance for the sufi.

He has expressed the " Unification " (Tawhid) in his famous phrase: " Unification is the separation of that which has from that which was originated in Time." " Ifrad al-Qadim " "an al-muhdath."

That means:

- (1) To separate the Eternal Essence from the originated essence, i.e. to fix or hold fast to this Essence of God and to disprove or reject all others.
- (2) To separate the Attributes contained therein from all other attributes, i.e. to fix or hold fast to the Attributes of God and to disprove or refute all others.
- (3) To separate Actions, i.e. to separate the actions of God and to disprove and refute all others.

All of these. His Attributes and His Actions, are so completely absorbed in His Essence that he who is in the state to comprehend this Unification sees that the Essence, Attributes and Actions are all completely absorbed in the Essence of God.

He comes to this as he himself in this state is absorbed in God. The early and the later sufi writers were extremely impressed and attracted by this phrase of al-Junayd, and considered it the most brief and comprehensive of all the sufi sayings on Unification; each sufi has interpreted it in the light of his own particular approach.

For instance, Sarraj, after having mentioned the definition of Unification according to the sense which the Moslems generally attach to it, and according to the sense which the sufis attach to it, commented on a saying of Shibli to the effect that: " The Unity of God is utterly inexpressible and indefinable, " and quoted the brief sentence of al-Junayd as a justification of this statement.

Al-Hujwiri commenced with this sentence of al-Junayd when he considered the indications which the Shaykhs had given on this subject, and has interpreted it in this manner; "You must not regard the eternal as a place of phenomena, or phenomena as a place of the eternal; and you must know that God is eternal and that you are phenomena, and that nothing of your genus is connected with Him, and that nothing of His Attributes is mingled in you, and that there is no homogeneity between the eternal and the phenomenal."

Al-Qushayri began Chapter I of his risala on the dogma of the sufis with this saying of al-Junayd, as being the foundation of their faith, and mentions it again in the chapter on Unification, saying: " Al-Junayd said: ' Unification is the separation of the Eternal from that which was originated in Time, and departure from familiar haunts and separation from brethren and forgetfulness of what is known and unknown, and God only in place of ALL' "

The later writers, too, have put stress on this sentence; for instance, Tahanawi, in his definition of Unification by the sufis, said: " The result of all the hints and signs is in brief that ' Unification is the separation of the Eternal, etc.' "

Ibn Taymiya, who was an extreme Sunni, quotes this

phrase of al-Junayd, stresses and praises it. He says: " What Junayd has said about the difference between the Eternal and the originated, is something to safeguard many of the mystics from the danger of following the wrong path." Some of them have scolded Junayd for this phrase, like Ibn 'Arabi in his book, " Al-Isra ila Maqam al-Asra" in which he says: " O Junayd, who could distinguish between two things, except if he is neither the one nor the other." And Ibn Taymiya argues against Ibn 'Arabi proving that he is wrong and that al-Junayd is right. At any rate, the meaning of ifrad al-qidam, separation of the Eternal, or we may also say the Absolute, is not only a separation (remotio) carried out theoretically, by reason, but a practical experiencing of the Infinite with the extinction of everything finite. This will become clearer as we proceed with other definitions of al-Junayd.

Al-Junayd has illustrated Tawhid in its various aspects in many of his letters. He made it especially clear when he classified the stages of the Muwuhhidun and described in detail their respective features. He says in one of his letters:

" Know that Tawhid is found in four stages in people.

The first is the Tawhid of the ordinary people; the second is the Tawhid of those who are well versed in formal religious knowledge. The third and fourth stages are experienced by the elect who have esoteric knowledge (ma'rifa)."

The theologians do not agree with this classification of those who possess Tawhid, saying that this word Tawhid could not be classified neither from the viewpoint of God nor from the viewpoint of man. Tawhid, they say, is only a right way between two wrong extremes and nothing more. And so that majority of theologians hold that the faith in each and all of the believers is one and the same, and they differ only in the manner of approach.

Al-Ghazzali solves this difficulty by saying that the classification of Tawhid means that everyone is in a special state different from any other.

Certainly al-Junayd, in his endeavour after classification, has in mind that state of every individual. They all believe in God, but are in various stages according to their kind of belief. This question of the degree of belief takes up a large proportion of the discussion between the theologians. But al-Junayd analyses this question in another way than the theologians. He approaches it in a psychological and ethical way, describing the effect and result in the person of the believer. So his distinction is not speculative, but through a mature experience and fine human understanding, an approach which we meet for the first time in Islamic thought.

He describes the Tawhid of ordinary people as follows:

" As for the Tawhid of ordinary people, it consists in the assertion of the Unity of God, in the discarding of any conception of gods, companions, opposites, equals, likenesses to God, but with the retention of hopes and fears in forces other than God. This type of Tawhid possesses a measure of efficacy since the assertion persists."

This simple Tawhid is what Islam demands of every believer as a basis of faith in God. Such a muwahhid has not the complete awareness of God, because while these two things, hope and fear, in forces other than God, are still existent in the consciousness of the believers, they prevent the complete realization of God. If one possesses the complete power of Tawhid, these things will certainly disappear just as, when the sun shines, the stars disappear.²

Then Junayd describes the second stage as follows;

" As for the Tawhid of those who are well versed in formal religious knowledge, it consists in the assertion of the Unity of God, in the discarding of any conception of gods, companions, opposites, equals, likenesses to God, combined with the performance of the positive commands and the avoidance of that which is forbidden so far as external action is concerned, all that being a result of their hopes, fears and desires; this type of Tawhid has a measure

of efficacy since the assertion of the Unity of God is being publicly proved."

The difference between these two states is that, while the man who lives in the first state may not be able to master life and to reach the standard of decency, balance of mind, reason, truthfulness and goodness in society, and the state of performance of the commands of Religion and avoidance of what is forbidden, a man in the second state possesses all these virtues, and thus he will prove through his virtue, his whole life and actions in society, the Unity of God. Yet his motive for being good may still be partly rooted in his hopes, fears and desires. These two stages are not the highest stage of awareness of God which man can reach. So al-Junayd goes further to the next state:

" As for the first type of esoteric Tawhid, it consists in the assertion of the Unity of God, the discarding of the conception of the things referred to, combined with the performance of God's command externally and internally, and the cessation of hopes and fears in forces other than God, all this resulting from the ideas which tally with the awareness of God's presence with him, with God's call to him, and his answer to God."

This muwahhid still preserves his individuality. This state is not the complete Unification which the muwahhid can reach as he is still aware of something other than God, namely, himself. Yet higher still for Junayd is that other experience, the last stage of Unification, which he describes as follows:

" The second type of esoteric Tawhid consists in existence without individuality (shabah) before God with no third person as intermediary between them, a figure over which His decrees pass as He in His Omnipotence determines, and that he should be sunk in the flooding seas of His Unity, completely obliterated both from himself and from God's call to him and his answer to God. It is a state where the devotee has achieved the true realization of the Oneness of

God in true proximity to Him. He is lost to sense and action because God fulfils in him what He hath willed of him."

That is, he is in the Will of God and has no more a will of his own. This is not the absolute subjection of will and personal desire to the Eternal Will of God, as the foregoing state. It is more than mere resignation to God's Will. It means that the individual will become none other than the very Will of God, who wills and works, lives and creates, through our will, so that there is but one Will.

This saying of al-Junayd indicates that, according to becomes like an atom, as he was in the eternal past, when the Covenant of Unification was made. It means, as the same time, the annihilation of the individual when he is overpowered by the revelation of His majesty, so that he becomes a passive instrument and a subtle substance that feels nothing, and his body is a repository for the mysteries of God to Whom his speech and actions are to be attributed."

This highest stage of Unification, as Junayd witnesses it, is based on two theories of his system:

God the Creator and the human creature, and realization by man of his place before God.

man fulfils the Unity of God through losing his individuality and being present only in God.

We proceed to analyse this last state through an explanation of these two complementary theories.

THE THEORY OF MITHAQ

Junayd continues his description of the final stage of Tawhid: " This implies that in his final stage the worshipper returns to his first state, that he is as he was before he existed."!

Junayd holds the belief that the worshipper before his corporal existence had another existence. He proves this from the verse of the Qur'an;

" When thy Lord had brought forth their descendants from the loins of the Sons of Adam and made them to witness concerning themselves, ' Am I not,' said He, ' your Lord?' They said; 'Yes! we do so testify.'

He interprets this verse as follows;

" In this verse God tells you that He spoke to them at a time when they did not exist, except so far as they existed in Him. This existence is not the same type of existence as is usually attributed to God's creatures; it is a type of existence which only God knows and only He is aware of. God knows their existence; embracing them he sees them in the beginning when they are non-existent and unaware of their future existence in this world. The existence of these is timeless."

And also:

" When He called them and they answered quickly, their answer was a gracious and generous gift from Him; it was His answer on their behalf when He granted them their being, their function being that of interlocutors. He gave them knowledge of Him when they were only concepts which He had conceived. He then wished it, and made them like seeds which He transformed at His Will into human seeds, and put them in the loins of Adam. ... In this verse Allah has stated that He spoke to them when they had no formal existence. This is possible because Allah perceives them in their spiritual existence. This spiritual existence connotes their knowledge of God's spirituality without in any way postulating their being aware of their own individuality. So, according to Junayd, there are two types of existence; the one being divine existence (existence in Him), which is timeless and which we have before our coming here, and the other being existence in this created world. He described the

first as follows:

" This then is a divine existence and a God-like conception which becomes only Him."

And further;

" This type of existence is without doubt the most perfect and penetrating. It is the most significant, dominant, and is more adequately described as conquering, victorious and truly overwhelming, than the normal existence of which the worshipper is aware, because in the Divine existence his individuality is entirely obliterated and his worldly existence departs from him. This is because no human quality survives nor does normal human existence persist, as we have made clear in describing the Divine qualities of God's Truth and God's Victory."

And also;

" Whereas their first existence is completely real, is better, higher, and more conducive to God's conquest and victory, and to their complete absorption in Him by means of that which He has granted them."

But al-Junayd refrains from giving a detailed description of this type of existence. He says:

" It is a type of existence which only God knows and only He is cognisant of."

And also:

" It follows then that, at this stage (of his), God has existence of a sort which is known only to Him and recognized only by Him."

On the other hand, he tells us who existed and how. He says:

" Who existed, and how could he have existed before he had existence? Did anyone answer to God's question other than the pure, fine and holy souls in accordance with God's Omnipotence and Perfect Will?

This idea of al-Junayd of a pre-existence of the soul, real existence before our becoming here, and existence different from our 'secondary,' derived existence as created beings, seems to

echo Neo-platonic ideas and is similar to what Plotinus says in the Enneads:

" Before we had our becoming here, we existed There, men other than now; we were pure souls. Intelligence inbound with the entire of reality, not fenced off, integral to that All. . . . Then it was as if One voice sounded. One word was uttered and from every side an ear attended and received and there was an effective hearing; now we are become a dual thing, no longer that which we were at first, dormant, and in a sense no longer present."

About our secondary existence as created beings Plotinus says:

" By this non-being of course we are not to understand something that does not exist, but only something of an utterly different form from Authentic-Being; the non-being we are thinking of is, rather, an image of Being or perhaps something still more removed than even an image."

This differentiation reminds us of the differentiation which al-Junayd makes between real existence and our secondary, not real, existence. He has already made this differentiation in his definition of Tasawwuf, where he says; " Tasawwuf in essence; is an attribute of God, but by image, it is an attribute of man." (See p. 87.) This means that, inasmuch as our being is conceived by God, it is real. In our opinion Junayd interpreted the Qu'ran verse on the Mithaq through the Neo-platonic doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul. In his mind there was a deep harmony between the verse of the Qu'ran and the teachings of mystical philosophy.

If we try to sum up this theory and to describe this highest state of Unification which the worshipper can attain, we find that the worshipper returns to his primordial state where he has been before he was created. That is, he departs from his worldly existence, his normal human existence does not continue, and hence he exists in God and is completely absorbed in Him. It is thus that the muwahhid can attain the real Tawhid. As long as he preserves his individuality he cannot attain this full state of

Tawhid, as the continued persistence of his individuality means that something other than God is still present.

Junayd seems to aim at that stage when he says:

" In this state He has full possession of them and has destroyed their individuality and has removed their characteristics as we perceive it.

" This is because Existence, after complete suppression of person is not the same as normal existence. The ultimate Truth of God is now refulgent and His Victory is complete."

And also:

" It is for this reason that we said, that when God graced existence to His worshippers. He caused, as it were, His desire to flow over them according to His Will."

This means that, according to Junayd, God, when He creates a human being, has already the intention to overwhelm him and to make him fully One with Himself again. Even in this world, if He chooses him and if man lives up to His choice, He will obliterate his individuality and make him realize the Oneness of God. Thus Junayd continues:

" In view of the foregoing we said that God has obliterated what appears to the worshipper, and when He has overwhelmed him, God shows Himself as the most overpowering, the perfect conqueror, the completely victorious. In this state, God is the direct actor according to His perfection, and what man does and wills in this state is nothing but the Will and Action of God.

This state is not something which the worshipper attains unaided, but it is a gift of God to the worshipper whom He chooses. Junayd proves this from the Hadith:

" My servant draws nigh unto me by works of supererogation and I love him; and when I love him I am his ear, so that he hears by Me, and his eye, so that he sees by Me."

Junayd comments on this Hadith, explaining that this should not be understood literally. The meaning can be only:

" That it is God who strengthens him; who enables him

to achieve this; who guides him and who gives the vision of what He wishes in the manner He wishes, so that he achieves tightness and is in accord with Truth. This, then, is the act of God in him; the gift of God to him and only to him. It is not to be attributed positively to the worshipper, since it does not originate from him. Nay, it comes over him from elsewhere and must, therefore, be attributed to another source. This, then, is a possible interpretation of the secret and independent state of the nature described above." This whole state is what Junayd meant by his definition of Tasawwuf: " Tasawwuf is that God should make you die from yourself and should make you live in Him."

He further says:

" The living man in the one for whom life finds itself on the life of his Creator, not the one who finds his life on the subsistence of his bodily form (haykal), so that the reality of his life will be his death, as his death in the access to the stage of his primordial Life."

How can the worshipper die in himself and live in God how can he achieve and fulfil this state? Junayd explains this in his theory of Fana'.

THE THEORY OF FANA'

Both al-Junayd's theory of Mithaq (Covenant) and his theory of Fana' (Oblivion) show us the road to the same end, the highest state of Unification. Both Mithaq and Fana' are different approaches to Tawhid, the former explaining the state of Return to God, the latter describing the way, method, training and successive steps to attain this state. Thus, for the muwahhid to reach this state of his divine existence, he will have to lose his human existence, which is a secondary one, so that he may realize his divine existence in the Oneness with God, which is the primary one. So, in fact, the two theories are mutually

complementary,

Junayd recognizes three stages of Fana' (oblivion, obliteration), which he defines and expounds as follows:

First: " The obliteration of attributes, characteristics and natural qualities in your motives when you carry out your religious duties, making great efforts and doing the opposite of what you may desire, and compelling yourself to do the things which you do not wish to do."

Second: " The obliteration of your pursuit after pleasures and even the sensation of pleasure in obedience to God's behests so that you are exclusively His, without any intermediary means of contact."

Third: " The obliteration of the consciousness of having attained the vision of God at the final stage of ecstasy when God's victory over you is complete. At this stage you are obliterated and have eternal life with God, and you exist only in the existence of God because you have been obliterated. Your physical being continues but your individuality has departed."

The first stage is concerned with man's active life, his *vita activa*. Man has to put behind himself his personal affections and impulses, his calculations and passions this is what al-Junayd describes as the " attributes and qualities of his aiming " while carrying out his duties as a Moslem. He will need a continued moral training, a conscious ascetic way of life in order to fulfil this task, and will often have to act against the wishes and desires of his own soul which disturb and entangle the purity of his aiming. This state of Fana" is of a moral and objective order.

The second stage implies that the worshipper should cut himself off from all the worldly pleasures of his senses and even from the enjoyment of his own good deeds in fulfilling the religious injunctions of God, thus remaining without any intermediary object which might serve man to put himself into indirect contact with God. This stage of Fana' is of a mental

and subjective order.

The third stage implies that man loses even the consciousness of his having reached the vision of God. Facing God, his consciousness of himself becomes extinct. This is the state of which we have heard previously, when the worshipper is entirely overwhelmed and engulfed by God the complete victory of God over him. At this stage the individuality of the worshipper is quite obliterated though for his fellow men he still has his physical body and appearance. In himself he has now no separate existence any more. His former being is, so to speak, dead. He has returned to eternal life ;he lives with and in God only.

This state the final state of Fana' includes Baqa', the abiding and continuing in God. Fana' and Baqa' mean the same state from a different aspect. When one has reached the complete Fana' of one's individuality in God, one, at the same time, is remaining and perpetuated in God. Fana' is not merely the cessation of Self, like the Buddhist Nirvana, but, as we have seen, it includes the continuation of the worshipper's self in God.

At this point we gain a very important insight into al-Junayd's conception of God. Though Fana' might lead to Pantheism if it were an end in itself, this, as we see it, is not the case with the Fana' of al-Junayd. His Fana', as we see it, is consistent only with the Baqa' in God. The personal character of God remains even in this state and there remains in God the eternal self of the worshipper. This is so, even in the state of Fana' before the worshipper returns to himself (state of Sobriety).

We have to keep in our mind that even in this highest state the Worshipper cannot comprehend the full Reality of God, though he is " taken up by God " and lives in Him. Al-Junayd says;

" Even so, in this divine state, it is not possible for him to approach the Ultimate Reality which now possesses him. It is only in this state that God can be seen in His exalted

Nature, and His Beatific Names be appreciated."

Thus, even in this state, the worshipper cannot be identical with God (Ittihad). Al-Junayd insists on this point in all his teaching. He says:

" At this stage, then, when God has complete possession of them, Bala overtakes them because of their human qualities which still persist, because of their enjoyment of physical pleasures. This, then, is the veil between them and God, which God has placed between them and Him, so that they can still retain a measure of their individuality and use both their physical and spiritual faculties in this environment of glory, in this consequence of praise (dhikr) in the victory of God's conquest. How can this be known to you if none but the elect know it, and only they can discover it, and only they are capable of this knowledge ? Can you comprehend how it is that they should seek God and yet not reach Him though they are helped by God's revelation to them, and are aided by the help of God's Truths. It is because God has made them cognisant of an aspect of His existence and given them complete conviction of His hidden secrets which are the path to Him when the human qualities are obliterated and human needs are nullified."

Fana', as al-Junayd experienced it, is thus not the passing away of man's being in God's being . . since they are wholly separate from His and lose their own eyes, God being firmly established in His Power and Glory," but it is the passing away of man's will in God's Will, as we have seen before.

This point is very important in Junayd's mystic teaching on Fana' and it has been misunderstood by later interpreters.

Sarraaj was aware of this error, for he says; " Some mystics of Baghdad have erred in their doctrine that, when they pass away from their qualities, they enter into the qualities of God. This involves incarnation (hulul) or leads to the Christian belief concerning Jesus. The doctrine in question has been attributed to some of the ancients, but its true meaning is this: that,

when a man goes forth from his own qualities and enters into the qualities of God, he goes forth from his own will, which is a gift to him from God, and enters into the Will of God, knowing that his will has been given to him by God, and that by virtue of this gift he can stop seeing himself and become entirely devoted to God; and this is one of the stages of those that seek Tawhid (Unification with God). Those who have erred in this doctrine have failed to observe that the qualities of God are not God. To make God identical with His qualities is to be guilty of infidelity, because God does not descend into the heart, but that which descends into the heart is faith in God and belief in His unity and reverence for the thought of Him."

Sarraaj also says; " Some have abstained from food and drink, fancying that when a man's body is weakened it is possible that he may lose his humanity and be invested with the attributes of divinity. The ignorant persons who hold this erroneous doctrine cannot distinguish between humanity and the inborn qualities (akhkaq) of humanity. Humanity does not depart from man any more than blackness departs from that which is black or whiteness from that which is white, but the inborn qualities of humanity are changed and transmuted by the all-powerful radiance that is shed upon them from the Divine Realities. The attributes of humanity are not the essence of humanity. Those who speak of the doctrine of ¥and' mean the passing away of regarding one's own actions and works of devotion through continuously regarding God as the doer of these actions on behalf of His servant."

In this highest state of Fund, according to al-Junayd, where the worshipper has lost his worldly individuality, he yet is still separate from God. Many veils have been removed, but a veil still persists between God and man. This condition, as Junayd experienced it, is indeed full of longing and pain. It is a state of suspense, of anguish and of thirst for God. To bear it, is thus a test to the soul, Bala. God will help him and sustain him in this test of having given up his wordly individuality and yet

not being able to merge in the Absolute. Yet the soul may derive spiritual pleasure from its Bald\ this test and ordeal in facing God. Junayd says;

" They are consumed with longing for Him who has brought them Bald\ and moan constantly in this second loss of their individuality. This loss has been a grievous wound to them, their new state has depressed them. They grieve, suffering deeply as they seek after God. They are overcome by a thirst which is all-consuming and constantly increasing. The pursuit of knowledge of God is now the constant preoccupation of the soul, it is entirely devoted to submerging its individuality in the attainment of intimacy with God. This thirst for God is an anguish even more intense than the mourning for a beloved one. God makes of every external form a sign. He gives to the soul the taste of poverty and renews for the soul knowledge of the experience of spiritual effort.

" The soul accepts the spiritual burden with its implication of suffering, seeks for its cure, and is preoccupied with that divine revelation vouchsafed to it. Consequently, it is able to look on the remote with the eye of propinquity, to be closer to God because a veil has been removed and it is no longer completely concealed. Though the soul has Bala', it is not rejected. How can it be hidden from God by a veil when it is, as it were, a captive bound before Him? God has allowed the suppression of the individuality when man has Bala'. The soul no longer arrogates a degree of importance to its individuality but is amply satisfied with God's love and nearness.

" Such, then, is the infinite duration of this newly found spiritual life and the intensity of the stage of Bala that the suppression of the individuality is completely submerged by the lightning flesh of God's regard.

" As a result, the soul derives spiritual pleasures from

Bald' and is delighted with its Bald' with God, because it can enjoy propinquity with God and the wound of Bald' is soothed. The soul is not bent down under the burden of Bald' nor does it chafe at its spiritual load. Their experience makes heroes of them because of the secrets revealed to them they stay conquered by God, awaiting His commands, that Allah may designate what shall be done."

We come to the conclusion that al-Junayd, who has experienced as well as analysed the highest state of Unification (Tawhid) and who has clearly described the Mithaq and the Fana', has yet neither been swept into the sea of Pantheism, which would be losing consciousness of God and man and acknowledging one existence only, nor has he made himself, the worshipper, equal with God, deifying man (Ittihad). But he has experienced and described Unification as losing his will, which characterizes the worldly individuality, being possessed by God and returning into the life of his eternal self in God. Thus he would be unified with God, to the extent that this is granted by God to His creatures.

We may count al-Junayd as the classical witness, the teacher and interpreter of Tawhid in its most profound, aware and disciplined form. This is his place in the development of Islamic Mysticism. He was not the first who spoke of Tawhid. His teacher. Sari' as-Saqati and, before him, Mar'uf al-Karkhi, have done so, teachers to whom al-Junayd always felt indebted. But al-Junayd has put the Tawhid into the centre of the system of sufism and has left to us a clear and explicit doctrine of Tawhid in his works. This doctrine, he taught, as we have seen, in his oral teachings as well as letters in his small esoteric circle to those who could understand. Yet some of his pupils and later mystics were not able to grasp the meaning of this doctrine as a whole, in its integrity, but have picked out this or that part of it, thus sometimes being led into exaggeration and error. Rightly understood and fully comprehended, al-Junayd is a sound and lucid guide to sufism. His teaching on Tawhid is

basic, and is echoed in the doctrine of most sufi orders right up to modern times.

THE DOCTRINE OF SOBRIETY, SAHW

All those who have reached the state of Tawhid, having lost their individuality, having passed away from their human existence to live in God, all those who have been overwhelmed, and are entirely in the possession of their conqueror, their Lord, are without a will of their own, in the Will of God. It is not possible for them to think of doing or aiming at anything in this world. In this state the laws and standards which normally apply are without significance or meaning since for them everything is God's Will, whose instrument they are. The distinction between good and evil has become meaningless since everything coming from God is good.

This situation may logically lead the sufi to an attitude by which he puts himself outside the laws and order of society. In fact, some of the sufis came to ignore all the injunctions of the religious law, all the religious precepts and duties; " the performance of the positive commands and the avoidance of that which is forbidden," saying, that if one is in the Will of God, one need not follow the orders given by Him to men in their worldly state. These laws, they maintain, are intended by Him for the benefit of the common people, but they are superfluous for those who live in union with God.

This complete indifference to the laws of religion and the established customs of society may lead the sufi to a special kind of libertinism, as the history of sufism has shown repeatedly.

We find in many sufis a completely negative attitude to religious works. We can see this in the story which is reported of al-Junayd. A man said to al-Junayd; " Amongst the men of

God (sufis), there are those who hold that the keeping away from activity belongs to piety and fear of God." Al-Junayd answered; " That is the doctrine of people who treat religious works as of no worth, which I hold to be a grievous sin. Even the man who steals or commits adultery is still in a better condition than he who holds that view. In fact, those who know God receive the works of God and in return render them back to God. And, if I were to live a thousand years, I should not like to be found lacking in the works of piety even as much as a single grain of dust."

So we come to the ethical theory of al-Junayd, his theory of Sobriety (Sahw) which, with Tawhid, is the basis of his whole system of Mysticism. Hujwiri said of this doctrine of al-Junayd: " It is the best known and most celebrated of all doctrines and all Shaykhs have adopted it, notwithstanding that there is considerable difference in their statements of the ethics of sufism."

Al-Junayd recognized and experienced that the highest stage of Unification already referred to, the stage of Fana' when man has given up his will in the Will of God, is not the last stage, nor the final goal. This state of Fana' may be vitiated, according to al-Junayd, by ecstatic drunkenness. It cannot be the exclusive aim of the saint who also has a responsibility to his fellow men, because it involves the disturbance of his balance, the loss of his sanity and self-control.

God does not wish to keep His worshipper in isolation for ever. Al-Junayd says:

" In this stage of companionship, the range of his movements is limited; he can only go from God to God, for God and in God. He has Fana' and this too is obliterated because he persists in Baqa only through complete obliteration. God desires to return His worshipper to the community and does so, making clear the evidence of His grace to him, so that the lights of His gifts in the return of his individual characteristics scintillate and attract the community

to him who appreciate him."

Al-Junayd says further;

" He is himself, after he has not been truly himself. He is present in himself and in God after having been present in God and absent in himself. This is because he has left the intoxication of God's overwhelming ghalaba (victory), and comes to the clarity of sobriety, and contemplation is once more restored to him so that he can put everything in its right place and assess it correctly. Once more he assumes his individual attributes, after Fana'. His personal qualities persist in him, and his actions in this world, when he has reached the zenith of spiritual achievement vouchsafed by God, become a pattern for his fellow men."

Thus, no one can be a true Shaykh and teacher whom God will make a model to others, whom God trusts with a message to his fellow men, and whose life will be beneficial to men around him, except that, after being with God and absorbed in God, he returns unto himself and so will be one of the community, acting as they should, and accepting the law and order which God has established amongst them.

But when the sufi comes to this state of Sobriety and thus returns to the community, he still does not quite get away from the state of Fana' which he has experienced. But he keeps this experience like a secret treasure concealed within himself, inside his new state. In a manner of speaking, it radiates through him when he lives, speaks and works amidst the community. He lives, as it were, at the same time in God and in the community. These two states are only two facets of the same crystal.

Al-Junayd says:

" After their union with Him, He separates them from Himself (and grants them their individuality again). Then He makes them absent (from this world) when they are in union with Him, and makes them present (in this world) when He has separated them from Himself (and granted them their individuality again). Thus it is that their absence

from this world is but a facet of their presence with God and their presence in this world is a necessary cause of their absence from God."

In this state of Sobriety which al-Junayd experienced and described, the sufi is, so to speak, released to return to the community and to serve God's creatures. He will be able to spread the gifts he has from God to his fellow men, to each according to his degree of capacity; he will support the simple people through his piety; he will help those who have embarked on theological study as a theologian; he will lead and teach the young; and he will be a companion to the initiated, to his fellow mystics, and will share with them his most sublime experience. Thus, in his state of perfection, he will not be isolated, but with what he has received from God, he will be able to help others.

The combination of these two states, the state of Fana' and the state of Sobriety, in one and the same person, is difficult to achieve and uphold. It will be possible only to those whom God grants His continued grace. To be present and absent at the same time means a continual strain on the self. Al-Junayd says in a short poem:

I have realized that which is within me.

And my tongue has conversed with Thee in secret.

And we are united in one respect,

But we are separated in another.

Although awe has hidden Thee from the glances of mine eye,
Ecstasy has made Thee near to my inmost parts."

In this state al-Junayd experienced various waves of feeling.

In one of his letters he says that he felt the sadness and grief of his soul longing back to God. It feels as if it were banished from the presence of God and the accomplished living in Him. He says;

" But when God brings the spirit back to its normal state, he re-establishes it and gives it back to its own nature. Thus the experience with God and from God is hidden, the

soul grieves, and becomes used to its normal state, because it has lost its first perfection and highest favour. It has been brought back to the bounds of reason and perception. Its regret is profound and its anguish for what it has lost continues in its conscious existence and present reality. This, then, is the reason for the soul's longing, its needs have returned to it; how should it not suffer for being banished from God? The soul was satisfied and now thirsts anew. Al-Junayd says that it is characteristic of this state that the soul will seek for sights of beauty and aesthetic accomplishment in this world a longing which is well known to many mystics and which is the source of many of the most beautiful pages in classical Persian poetry it springs from the spiritual refinement of the soul of the mystic and its longing for the beautiful. For the mystic the beautiful in this world is an echo of his experience before God. But all these things of beauty and accomplishment which he may see in this world are a source of pain to the soul of the mystic, as they remind him that perfection is unobtainable here they remind him of the lost Beloved for Whom he is always homesick. This deep nostalgia of all mystics.

Al-Junayd says further:

" Thus it is that the souls of those who have known God seek after the green meadows, the beautiful vistas, the fresh green gardens but all those other things which they long for, echoing their experience before God, are a source of pain for them, because they serve only to remind them that they are unattainable, and recall the Lost Beloved. Sad indeed is their lot!

On the other hand, the mystic in this state of release will often feel at liberty; he will neither care nor worry; whether he is alone or amidst the multitude will be a matter of indifference to him; he will not be impressed by outside currents and influences; he will be independent of the things of this world and will enjoy an otherwise inconceivable state of liberty.

Al-Junayd, on looking at his earlier and his present life,

said;

" For a time I was such that the inhabitants of heaven and earth wept over my bewilderment. Then again I became such that I wept over their absence. And now my state is such that I have no knowledge either of them or of myself."

The state of Sobriety is sometimes termed by the mystics

" The Second Separation" (al-farq al-thani), since they call the state before ¥and " The First Separation " (al-farq al-awwal).

They also sometimes call the state of Sobriety " The Natural Separation " (al-farq al-tabi'i), or they call it " Union of Union " (jam' al jam') while calling the state of Fana' itself " Union" (jam').

Of those two states of the mystic, the one being Intoxication or Ecstatic Drunkenness, which is one aspect of being overwhelmed by God, the other being Sobriety, al-Junayd puts a strong stress on Sobriety. He is opposed to the school of Abu Yazid al-Bistami, who puts the main stress on Intoxication. Hujwiri, whose book we have to consider as an essential source for sufi schools in general, and for al-Junayd's teachings in particular, gives an account of the two attitudes. He says of Abu Yazid's school: " Abu Yazid and his followers prefer Intoxication to Sobriety. They say that Sobriety involves the fixity and equilibrium of human attributes which are the greatest veil between God and man, whereas Intoxication involves the destruction of human attributes like foresight and choice and the annihilation of a man's self-control in God, so that only those faculties survive in him that do not belong to the human genus, and they are the most complete and perfect."

Concerning al-Junayd and his school, he says: " Al-Junayd and his followers prefer Sobriety to Intoxication. They say that Intoxication is evil, because it involves the disturbance of one's normal state and the loss of sanity and self-control; and, inasmuch as the principle of all things is sought, either by way of annihilation or subsistence, of effacement or affirmation, the principle of verification cannot be attained unless the seeker is

sane. Blindness will never release anyone from the bondage and corruption of the phenomena. The fact that people remain in the phenomena and forget God is due to their not seeing things as they really are. For, if they saw they would avoid falling into this error.

" Seeing is of two kinds. He who looks at anything sees it either with the eye of subsistence (Baqā') or with the eye of annihilation (Fanā'). If he does so with the eye of subsistence, he will perceive that the whole universe is imperfect in comparison with his own subsistence (in God), for he does not regard the phenomena as self-subsistent, and if he looks with the eye of annihilation (in God), he will perceive that all created things are non-existent beside the subsistence of God. In either case, he turns away from created things. On this account the Apostle said in his prayer: ' O God, show us things as they are, because whoever thus sees them, finds rest.'

" Now such vision cannot be properly attained except in the state of Sobriety and the intoxicated have no knowledge thereof."

In this issue, Hujwiri chooses to follow the school of al-Junayd. He says: " My teacher, who followed the doctrine of al-Junayd, used to say that Intoxication is the playing-ground of children, but Sobriety is the battle-field of struggle and death of men. I say, in agreement with my teacher, that the perfection of the state of the man who has been intoxicated is Sobriety."

If we survey al-Junayd's doctrine of Sobriety, we come to the conclusion that his attitude to it and this teaching of his are something unique. In the history of mysticism in general, we are accustomed to find mystics who speak of their experience of unification with God and of being overwhelmed by God. There is always the danger that a man who is distinguished by God with such a degree of grace might remain isolated and be lost to the community. Some mystics, it is true, have returned to the community as preachers and teachers and sometimes as

founders of orders. But it is very rare that a mystic, a man who has undergone all the stages of mystical experience, can so far distance himself from his own experience as al-Junayd does, and gives us a clear theory of his state of accomplished Unification, and his following state of return into himself and into the world. This return of the mystic, as an altered and more perfect being, into the human community with a special mission from God to his fellow men is what al-Junayd's theory of Sobriety means. This attitude of a mystic is by no means negative towards human civilization.

That men with such a high and rare religious experience and such an intimate personal approach to God as were given to al-Junayd would, following in his footsteps, return to the community, in order to work for the benefit of their fellow men, was, as we feel, of significance for all the wider fields of human activity. Such men would be able to face at the same time the mystery of God and the tasks of the world in what al-Junayd describes as the stage of Sobriety. We mainly think of the field of teaching to which al-Junayd himself was devoted. It is not the place here to measure the degree of influence which this attitude at the same time mystic, clear and active may have had in the fields of Philosophy, of Art and Literature, and at times even of beneficent statesmanship.

The part played by sufism in spreading and integrating Islam and Islamic civilization throughout many lands, from this early age through the centuries to the present, is, to a large degree, an outcome of this attitude. That al-Junayd has been a guide to this attitude should not be forgotten.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD (MA'RIFA)

The sufis, in general, hold that the knowledge of God cannot be acquired by means of reason ('aql), as this knowledge is beyond the ken of reason. The sphere of reason is limited

by its very nature to objects which are finite.

God is not only immaterial, but also beyond the reach of logical comprehension. The knowledge of God, according to the sufis, can only be acquired by a state of the mind of man, which would allow God to grant him the gift of illumination and inspiration; it can only be reached by revelation.

In this tenet they differ from the theologians by rejecting rational knowledge ('ilm) as irrelevant. Instead of rational knowledge ('ilm) which, according to them, is insufficient for acquiring a comprehension of God, they use the term marifa, which is exactly like and possibly derived from the gnosis of Hellenistic theosophy direct intuitive knowledge of God based on Revelation and Vision. They see in ma'rifa (gnosis) the goal of the mystic, and they call the one who achieves this goal 'arif (gnostic). They therefore value ma'rifa higher than 'ilm.

Al-Qushayri says: " According to the sufis, marifa is the attitude of the man who acknowledges God in His names and attributes; who is further sincere in his actions, who frees himself from the blameworthy traits of character and from weaknesses, who at all times stands at the gate and continuously lets his heart dwell with God, so that God would grant him friendly reception, and who in all his conditions is sincere and free from the influence of his self, and who in his heart does not listen to any influence which calls him in a direction other than that to God. When thus he has become alien to creature, free from the frailties of self, Liberated from the bonds of human contacts and mental distractions, when in his innermost being he is in continuous communion with God, and at each moment truly comes back to God, when he has knowledge of God by receiving His secrets concerning the operating of His decrees; then he will be called 'arif and his condition will be called ma'rifa.

The theologians (mutakallimun the schoolmen), on the other hand, in their conception of the knowledge of God, do not make a distinction between direct and indirect knowledge

of God; they hold that knowledge of God is based on evidence and on reason; they may make a distinction between 'ilm and ma'rifa, but both are to them, in any case, of a rational nature and are the same in value.

Now we come to the place of al-Junayd in this controversy.

Al-Junayd holds that the nature of knowledge of God is always essentially the same because the object is the same. But it has degrees, a different degree for the ordinary man and for the saint. A different degree for the beginner, for the advanced and for the one who reaches the highest stage. But none of them can attain to the complete knowledge of God on account of the limited nature of the human mind and the infinite nature of God. Thus al-Junayd, like the theologians, and unlike most of the sufis, uses the words 'ilm and marifa for knowledge of God equally. He does put great stress on it that the knowledge of God in every case is essentially the same and differs only in degrees. He explains this in a very clear and explicit statement, and this is what he says:

" I was asked about Knowledge of God (marifa) and how to acquire it, and I answered that, since the object of this knowledge is one, knowledge of God, both by saints and by ordinary men, is of the same nature. However, it differs in degree. Clearly the saint has more profound knowledge, but complete knowledge is impossible, because of the infinite nature of God. Knowledge of God cannot be complete, since the instrument of knowledge is the intellect, and both mind and imagination are limited by their very nature.

Those of His creatures who know most about Him are the first to say that they are unable either fully to comprehend His greatness or to reveal His nature to their fellow human beings. They know that they are unable to comprehend Him, to whom nothing is like, because He is the everlasting and others are created, and He is the eternal and the others are appearances, and He is the Godhead and

the others are subservient to Him, and He is Almighty, being Himself the source of His own strength, and every strong being is strong through His strength, and He knows all without being informed. He needs not to have recourse to others, and every being who has knowledge has his knowledge from God. Praise be to God the First without beginning, the Everlasting without end. No one but He can be so described and to Him only is this description fitting.

" It follows, then, that His saints have a higher degree of knowledge of Him, even though this knowledge is imperfect, whereas the ordinary man, albeit he is devout, has a lesser degree of that knowledge. But, since this knowledge exists in varying degrees in both types of man, it is possible to investigate the nature of the phenomena of this knowledge as they occur in these men. In its first and simplest stages, knowledge of God expresses itself in the His punishments, the richness of His rewards; His Generosity and unfailing Kindness in Paradise, His compassionate Nature, the multitude of His Gifts, His Graciousness, and His Good Actions, His Generosity and His Mercy. The more intense their perception of these qualities becomes, the more they extol Him, revere Him and love Him. They become humble before God, they fear Him and they hope in Him. They observe His ordinances and do not do that which is forbidden. They dedicate both mind and body entirely to God, and are impelled in this course by the intensity of their knowledge of God, their appreciation of His Exaltedness, the richness of His reward and the efficacy of His punishment. These are the privileged people and they are His saints.

"It is, therefore, that people say of someone: “‘Arif bi Allah ‘ or ‘ ‘Alim bi Allah.’ Among Moslems, when a man is seen to extol God, to revere Him, to fear Him, to hope in God, to seek Him, to yearn for Him, to practice righteous

ness and godly conduct, to weep and be grieved for his iniquities, to approach God with meekness and humility; this man is recognized as one whose knowledge of God is of a higher degree than that of an ordinary man.

" They are described in the Qur'an in the following proclamation of His Unity, the affirmation of absolute monotheism, belief in His existence, acceptance of the Qu'ran and the ordinances contained therein. In its higher are the first to say that they are unable either fully to comprehend His greatness or to reveal His nature to their fellow human beings. They know that they are unable to comprehend Him, to whom nothing is like, because He is the everlasting and others are created, and He is the eternal and the others are appearances, and He is the Godhead and the others are subservient to Him, and He is Almighty, being Himself the source of His own strength, and every strong being is strong through His strength, and He knows all without being informed. He needs not to have recourse to others, and every being who has knowledge has his knowledge from God. Praise be to God—the First without beginning, the Everlasting without end. No one but He can be so described and to Him only is this description fitting.

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of God at all times, the recognition of God in all His creatures, the observance of a high moral standard and the avoidance of what is forbidden.

" Now, the higher degree of knowledge of God enjoyed by those who are privileged exceeds that of the ordinary man in intensity. This intensity depends on their perception of His Majesty, His Glory, His Omnipotence, His all-embracing Knowledge, His never-failing Generosity, His Nobility and His Superiority in all those attributes. In the measure of their perception they become aware of His Exaltedness, the elevation of His Majesty, the reverence due to Him, His Omnipotence, the efficacy and thoroughness of His punishments, the richness of His rewards; His Generosity and unfailing Kindness in Paradise, His compassionate Nature, the multitude of His Gifts, His Graciousness, and His Good Actions, His Generosity and His Mercy. The more intense their perception of these qualities becomes, the more they extol Him, revere Him and love Him. They become humble before God, they fear Him and they hope in Him. They observe His ordinances and do not do that which is forbidden. They dedicate both mind and body entirely to God, and are impelled in this course by the intensity of their knowledge of God, their appreciation of His Exaltedness, the richness of His reward and the efficacy of His punishment. These are the privileged people and they are His saints.

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" They are described in the Qur'an in the following

verse:

Of his worshippers God esteems
highest those that know Him.'

We see clearly from al-Junayd's words that the instrument for acquiring knowledge of God is the intellect but this rational approach will be in degrees. The knowledge of the ordinary man will be less than the knowledge of one whose intellect is clearer and who has reached a clearer and surer insight. But even the latter will not have the complete knowledge of God as the instrument is limited by its very nature, and God, by His very nature, is infinite. It is possible, according to al-Junayd, to inquire into the nature of the phenomena of this knowledge as it occurs in these different men.

Al-Junayd finds two types of knowledge of God which he calls the " first knowledge " and the " second knowledge." The one is discursive knowledge and the other intuitive knowledge, He says in one of his letters:

" A man who has acquired knowledge genuinely, who performs what this religious knowledge demands punctiliously, who is completely devoted to it, will find that the exigencies of that knowledge will not be one with his instinctive mental desires. He will then return to God, humble, modest, poor and with little, and ask Him to carry his burden of the knowledge of truth. At this stage he becomes able to carry out the exigencies of the second type of knowledge by the dominance of his intuitive spiritual desires over his actions, and is no longer positively aware of his knowledge of truth of the first type which bound him to the conditions laid down in its laws."

It seems that Ibn Khaldun in his Muqaddima (prologomena) shares this view of al-Junayd. He gives exactly the same theory in the same terms.

The rational attitude in acquiring the knowledge of God, according to al-Junayd, will lead a part of the way, but not all the way, to the goal. The goal for al-Junayd is still the Unification

with God, the Tawhid in which the worshipper has lost his individuality and his individual reason. He thus says further:

" At this stage he comes to the stage of the obliteration of his individual instinctive desire for pleasure and also to the disappearance of his critical distinction with regard to the purification of his instincts through the disappearance of his desire for pleasure. Then he is able fully to comprehend the true indications towards God from the nature of events, the changes in things, without need for any media of understanding, since now his faculty of distinction coincides with a purified intuition."

So we see that human reason (aql) and the work of the human intellect has its tasks and directs the seeker in the first stage of acquiring knowledge (‘ilm, ma’rifa). This knowledge will be either discursive or, on a higher level, intuitive. But after that, in the state of Tawhid, the muwahhid is completely possessed by God and has lost his individuality, and here the human intellect, which, according to al-Junayd, is the instrument of knowledge ‘ilm and ma’rifa), has no place. He says:

" When the worshipper has reached this stage he can no longer be described in rational terms. In fact, the promptings of his reason to the worshipper who has realized to the full the special Tawhid are now nothing but evil whispers which he has to overcome. It is reason which formerly directed the worshipper in his worship when he worshipped God as an individual, but when he is completely possessed by God, his individuality is suppressed. He is, as it were, transmuted. His external characteristics remain the same, but his individuality has vanished. Thus he is at once present and absent.

Al-Junayd experienced and witnesses that, when the seeker has reached that high stage of intense knowledge, he will quite naturally have left his individuality behind, and with it his human knowledge, and God’s integral Knowledge will appear before him. Al-Junayd says in one of his letters:

" When the Knowledge of God has become intense and has raised you to a high degree, when your heart is full of this Knowledge, and you are pleased to serve Him and your mind becomes clear by mentioning His Name, and your understanding depends on Him, then your human existence is gone, your self-will have vanished, and your knowledge shall be enlightened because it comes from God, and God's Knowledge 'ilm al-Haqq) shall appear before you.

This highest state of enlightenment is what al-Junayd calls, as we have seen, Tawhid Unification; yet in this state a new kind of knowledge marifa is revealed to him. This revealed knowledge is not additional knowledge about God, but a part of God's Knowledge which He gives to the muwahhid.

Al-Junayd experiences that the knowledge of the Unity of God may be reached by the seeker and he still may not be in the state of Unification. If and when he reaches the state of Unification, he will do so entirely without knowledge.

Al-Junayd says further:

" The knowledge of Unity of God is different from the finding and feeling of Unification itself, and the finding and feeling of Unification is different from the knowledge of Unity.

Ibn Qayyim interprets this as follows:

" That means, one may, without any doubt comprehend the Unity of God and feel its intensity, but under circumstances which may be changed the worshipper may still be liable to be changed himself, because he is not yet in the state of Unification. This man is referred to as having the knowledge of the Unity of God, but still has not found Unification. Others feel Unification in their hearts and are overwhelmed in seeing the Unity of God, but what they find and feel is quite different from the knowledge of God; they are in a state of Unification."

In al-Junayd's terminology different from the terminology of some other sufis who take ma'rifa as the last goal the last goal is quite clearly: Tawhid, Unification. Yet in Unification he himself has experienced a new thing, a vision and revelation from God for which he has no word: so that for lack of a term he calls it ma'rifa. Yet it has nothing to do with that knowledge, ma'rifa, of the striving seeker before that last stage which al-Junayd has described. It is essentially different, that is to say, it is not any more knowledge of God but a share in God's Knowledge.

What we have seen may explain to us why al-Junayd uses the term ma'rifa in two quite different senses, and why he some times uses the word 'arif for the one who has reached the state of Tawhid. He says, for instance: " The 'arif could not be an 'arif until he is like earth upon which the pious and impious walk; and like the clouds that are spread over everything; and like the rains that descend upon all places quite without any likes and dislikes." Once, when he was asked about the 'arif, he replied: " The colour of his vessel is the colour of water." Or: " The 'arif is a son of the time being, meaning that he looks not to the past nor to the future. Al-Junayd, when asked about the saying of Dhu 'n-Nun about the 'arif. " He has been here and has gone away," gave the explanation: "The 'arif does not restrict himself to any state which would prevent his entering another state, nor does he restrict himself to a station which would prevent his moving to another station. He behaves just like the people in whichever state they may be, whom he meets. He shares their feelings and speaks with people whatever their spiritual condition, so that they may understand and benefit from his words.

By expression 'arif, when applied in this way, al-Junayd, as we clearly see, does not mean the one who still seeks the knowledge of God a seeking which, according to him, works by the means of the intellect but he quite clearly means the muwahhid whom God inspired and to whom God in His grace

has revealed Himself.

Now, after having reached this stage for which he left his individuality and all that goes with individuality, passions, will and reason behind, he will have to return to his normal state as an individual in which his reason and individuality and all that will be restored to him. Yet he will be a new individual with human qualities, carrying at the same time his experiences of God within him. Thus he will be at once present and absent, absent and present.

AL-JUNAYD AND PLOTINUS

The influence of Neo-platonic philosophy on the mystical teaching of Islam has been proved definitely for the later Islamic period. It has been clearly traced in Ibn 'Arabi, Sahra wardi, and others. But for the earlier period, from lack of material, this question has remained in doubt.

The letters of al-Junayd, which we have endeavoured to interpret in this study, have shed a new light on this problem and give a firm basis for considering it.

In al-Junayd's letters we meet, as we have indicated above, numerous traces of Neo-platonic philosophy which cannot be put down to the chance of similar thinking and parallel experience only, but which must be based on some positive contact. Moreover, we find that these Neo-platonic elements in al-Junayd are in no way tinted by the Christian mystical thought, itself largely of Neo-platonic inspiration, which flourished before and at that time in the Near East. What we find appears to be a sum of pure and classical Neo-platonic ideas, not blended with any other elements so characteristic for the later evolution of Neo platonism in Eastern Christian thought.

As the Neo-platonic literary tradition is very complex and scattered, we think it the best way to go back to the originator of this whole vast and profoundly influential school, to Plotinus

himself (a.c. 205-270). The philosophy of Plotinus of Alexandria, which bases itself on the system of Plato and integrates much of the Aristotelic and Stoic thoughts, is preserved to us in full in the six books of the Enneads which contain the teachings of the great thinkers, in his inimitable personal style, written down by the hand of his nearest disciple, Porphyry. We thus propose to give a brief survey of Plotinus' general philosophy and of his mystical approach. This will convey to us a wide view of the problem and will allow us to make a comparison.

Al-Junayd's writings seem to indicate that he has not had in his hand any Neo-platonic systematic work. We find no signs that he made a study of the whole general system of the Neo platonics with its characteristic cosmology, astronomical theory, physics and aesthetics. The influence is only in the range of mysticism which is al-Junayd's personal concern. We thus assume that this current of ideas must have reached him through his teachers or other contemporaries unknown to us, by word of mouth. He seems not to have been conscious of " philosophising, " but to have absorbed and integrated these thoughts, as they reached him, into his own seeking and thinking.

SUMMARY OF PLOTINUS' GENERAL PHILOSOPHY

We try to give a brief, sketchy survey of Plotinus' system and of his mystical thought.

Plotinus starts from two facts, which he takes as accepted by those who are his students: the higher Reality or intelligible World other than the ordinary world around us, and the soul sharing in this higher world.

In the centre of his system stands what we may call the Plotinian trinity.

(a) The primary for him is the One which he traces in his deductions as the Origin, the First, the Good. He is shy to give It or Him any name, and stresses that each of these terms is insufficient. One ought to call it neither that nor this. He states that the One is even beyond being. He is but one, not composite,

quite Himself, supermundane; neither is He thought, nor thinkable, non-active, nor Himself thinking. " He needs nothing," being utterly self-sufficient. Thus he cannot, according to Plotinus, be imagined as the creator of the existing all which still originates from Him. Plotinus uses the comparison with the Light itself which is eternally, and with diffused light which derives from it " without any streaming out and thus without making the source, the Light, any less."

(b) Thus Plotinus comes to the second principle of his trinity: the Nous, Mind, which, according to him, is the primary being. The Nous is all-knowing, perpetually thinking, seeing. His is wisdom (sophia) and power (dinamis). He is creating and upholding all that there is. He comprises creating and thinking in the same process all existence, the whole intelligible world and visible universe, the ideas or original forms, the divine beings whether invisible or those visible ones, the stars and planets and the earth, the human beings endowed with thinking souls, and the other creatures of nature. " The Nous sees as well the First, the One, as also the World. He is similar to the One, yet not the One, still composite, at the same time many-and-one,, all-embracing, swinging eternally in himself in a tranquil spherical movement."

(c) The third principle of Plotinus' trinity is Soul, Psyche. Soul is the creation of Nous, " the daughter of Nous." She is with and near to him. Yet she longs! She is bold enough to " separate " from Nous, craving for what is not Nous not spiritual the dark, low and heavy; that which is dangerously luring her away matter. Thus, " running away like a naughty child, she descends to the material world " and " embraces matter." She branches off into individual souls which will combine with matter, by this act imprinting the spiritual, the formative ideas on the material, thus bringing forth individual intermediate beings that possess soul in all ranges of creation, and particularly that double-natured being, man.

Her separation from her origin is a self-willed act which

Plotinus feels to be a kind of going astray. She now feels unhappy, homesick, longing to go back to her origin, her abode in the eternal. She is ever longing to return to her father. In most men, the soul is, as it were, submerged in the material existence, but in the best men the pious, the philosophers, the soul rises above the material. Such a man is not like ordinary creatures, men as well as animals, "submerged under the surface of the water," but he may be likened to someone "who has his feet in the water while his figure stands erect in the bright daylight."

The soul longing to go back to her origin, may break her fetters. She feels she has suffered violence by the body and like an unhappy bride she flees from her mate and runs away to her Father's house and finds comfort in the arms of her Father."

The soul, according to Plotinus, may even be able to soar beyond Nous and reach the First, the One.

In Plotinus' system Soul, as we have seen, is primarily Universal Soul individual souls are thus to say loans from this All-Soul. When Eustochius, his disciple and physician, came into the room when Plotinus was on his deathbed, Plotinus said: "For you I wait. I am just trying to give back what is spirit in me to the World Spirit."

Far from these three principles, the One, the Mind, and Soul, there is for Plotinus the utterly formless and soul-less, the not-being: matter. Thus creation is thought of in three stages, starting from the highest, lower and lower, sharing less and less in the spiritual, "a descending scale of perfection, the diminution continuing until it fades into not-being, like light into the darkness."

PLOTINUS' MYSTICAL APPROACH

The soul, according to Plotinus, cannot return to her origin without becoming light and no more heavy. The seeker has to put behind himself the cravings of the senses, the moods

of feeling, the promptings of the will and even the activity of reason. He has to leave behind even the ideas, making It, God, the sole object of his search. (He will perceive the ideas again later after his return " from the secret innermost chamber of the temple.") The seeker will finally lose even his self-consciousness. " He should get empty of feelings and even of ideas he shall even ignore himself as being now inside of It and living together with It and having communication with It." (VI 9. 7.)

Plotinus warns the mystic not to give access to any optical " visions." " The soul must be without any images, and there should remain in her nothing hindering from getting filled up and lit up with the First Nature." (VI 9. 7.)

The soul thus will become, as Plotinus teaches, quite herself: not any more composed or combined with anything alien, but quite one. (VI 9. 3; 4, pp. 531, 532.)

Concentrated on her goal, the soul will not any more move astray, but like in a circle she will be moving around Him, as a member of sacred choir moves around the leader of the choir and looks at him only, thus dancing right and singing in tune. Finally, the soul, from being a swinging point of the periphery of the circle, will fall back into the centre of the circle, " like an image stepping back into its original." (VI 9. II, pp. 539, 540.)

The philosopher warns his disciples not to be misled by such comparisons. " These circles and this centre are not in space like the circles of the mathematicians."

Plotinus makes it quite clear that God and the soul are not in space; we must not think in terms of space. The contact with Him is not in any other way but through similarity, through being of the same kind kindred to Him. Separation is through difference, through being different. (VI 9. 4.)

Plotinus accepts, as we have seen above, an original state of the soul with God, before she became united to the body by birth. " This is," according to Plotinus, " her origin as well as her goal; her origin because she comes from there, her goal

because the good is there. Living here, amongst these things in this world, means a falling-out and a flight and a loosing of her wings. Being there, she becomes what she was." (VI 9. 9.) Or, in another word of Plotinus: " When he is as he was when he came from Him, then he will be able to see Him, because He by nature can be seen." (VI 9. 4.)

As we see, Plotinus trusts and witnesses that the soul of a human being living as yet in this world, may be graced to return to the state " in which she was One, before she came into this world," thus to say anticipating, as far as humanly possible now,, her final return.

God is called by Plotinus in the language going back to Plato the True light, and the blessed man is the one who is able to " receive the True Light, and to let his soul be lit up entirely in having drawn near." (VI 9. 4.) He also compares God with the ever-vivifying air (in the original sense of the word *pneuma*, spirit = breath). " We breathe Him and are saved." (VI 9. 9.)

The Union is, according to Plotinus, experienced through an utter sensitiveness by virtue of similarity. " He is like all-feeling, touching It, as it were, with subtle fingertips throughout, fitting in and harmonized throughout, and thus to say all-embraced." (VI 9. 9, p. 532; cf. VI 9. 4.)

The experience of that splendour of light there, blissful as it is, means at the same time a suffering, an undergoing, like a lover's. " If he suffers nothing, and has not in himself like a suffering of love through that seeing, like a lover who found rest in the beloved ... he will not yet have been carried to the One." (VI 9. 4.) The soul in this world may, Plotinus says, smile like a courtesan at ever so many of its passing features. Yet she loves God with her only true love. (VI 9. 9, p. 537.)

Plotinus ascribes a relative value to the longing for the beautiful in this world to love and friendship between two mortals " love of images " he calls it as transient reflections of the Love of the One.

Plotinus impresses upon his disciples the difficulties of the progress " from knowledges, through knowledge, to view . . ." and he equally witnesses the difficulty, yea impossibility, for the soul to remain in the state of Union. She is liable of getting tired. She will get heavy again and sink and be separated Like birds, he says, who, flying over the shining surface of the sea, will feel tired out and will come down on firm ground for a rest. (VI 9. 3, p. 530.)

Again and again Plotinus stresses the difficulty of telling. The mystic is at a loss how to render account of his experience " because there was neither a seeing nor a seen but One." Neither subject nor object remained. He quotes Plato's word; " One can neither say nor write it. And yet we will ever try to do so."

Plotinus has the attitude of a teacher. It is possible, he says, to guide your disciple on the path of discipline and to induce him, through higher and higher argument of reason, to faith; " Part of the way the teacher may guide you. But then you will be quite left to yourself, quite alone, depending on your own firm will and innermost power . . ." (VI 9. 4.) " Take those notions, though inadequate; the First the Origin the Good the One, and starting from thence see . . ." (VI 9. 7.)

He urges that it is neither right nor pious to impart this knowledge to anyone who has nothing of this experience and longing in himself. He mentions the decree of contemporary mystery cults; " Don't Divulge Anything to the Uninitiated." Doing so might, according to Plotinus, cause grievous misunderstanding and misuse. This was already the attitude of Plato, who urged the recipient of his second Letter with its theological passages to burn the Letter after carefully reading it, so that it might not fall into wrong hands, and who, in his seventh Letter, says: " I have never written these things, nor will I." Young King Alexander reprimanded his teacher Aristotle, in a letter, for publishing his *Metaphysics* ; " In what will we still differ from the crowds ? " he wrote. Aristotle wrote

him, not to worry; " Those who read it, will read it and not understand it, if they are not of those who possess the knowledge."

We may follow Plotinus further and hear what he gives as his experience as to the state after the mystical Union. It is a positive, not a merely negative state. In this enlightened state after the Union, when the soul finds herself ordered and lit throughout, the mystic, led by the memory of his experience, may be able to do good deeds for others in the earthly society of men. " This," Plotinus says, " is probably what the ancient Greek poets meant when they called King Minos of Crete a Platon. 2nd Letter, 114 b.c. and 7th Letter, 341 c., 342 a. Plutarch, Life of Alexander. 7.

‘ companion of God.’ He may have put down his celebrated laws for his people like shadows and memories from his experience." (VI 9. 7.)

On the other hand, Plotinus witnesses that the soul, when she has fallen out of the Union and finds herself remote and isolated, will be filled with deep longing and sorrow. But, he says, she may yet repeat her experience, " she may become light again, and ascend again . .

We can do no better than to give Plotinus’ own words, the last sentences of the Enneads, which conclude the whole work. (VI 9. II.)

" But soaring upwards, the soul will come into nothing other than into herself... to be in herself alone, and not in anything that is, means to be in Him; For He Himself is not being, but beyond being, there where she communicates.

" Could someone see himself become such, he would have himself as a likeness of Him. And if he now would step beyond himself like an image into the original, then he would have reached the end of his journey.

" Yet should he fall out of the vision, he will again awaken the virtue which is in him and will find himself well ordered throughout and he will again, through virtue, become light

and rise to the Mind (Nous), and further, through wisdom, to It. And such is the life of gods and of godly and blessed men; a life turning away from all other things here and not enjoying things here, a flight of the only to the Only."

COMPARISON BETWEEN PLOTINUS' AND AL-JUNAYD'S MYSTICAL TEACHINGS

This brief sketch of the doctrine of Plotinus, which does not claim to be detailed or complete, yet allows us to compare the mystical teachings of Plotinus with those of al-Junayd.

Both Plotinus and al-Junayd hold that there is a highest Reality, and for both there is a gap between this Reality and the world of phenomena we live in.

According to both, the soul derives from that yonder. She has descended and finds herself in this lower world into which she came by birth. She is now a compound, complex creature, soul, reason, will, senses, held by the physical body. She longs to return to her origin and, through continuous striving and labour, she may be able to become quite herself quite one again, and thus ascend towards her original state.

Yet here we find a significant difference. According to Plotinus, the soul has separated from her Origin, having been drawn, through a kind of curiosity, down to the lower world into the embrace of the body. She makes a straying step, which leads to separation. For Junayd, while he also uses the term of separation, the descent of the soul into this lower world, and her being linked with the body by birth, is by no means caused by a volition of the soul, but simply by an act of God.

There is a very strong similarity between Plotinus and al-Junayd in this doctrine of the pre-existence and post-existence of the soul in the Divine Origin before and after this life.

Al-Junayd interprets the verses of the Qu'ran, VII, 166 and 167, in this sense, as we have shown above in our chapter on the Covenant, " Mithaq."

Both Plotinus and al-Junayd hold that by her nature the soul may ascend to her Origin, as God, by His nature, can be

seen " through force of inner vision " (mushahada).

The stages of this mystical path are indicated to their disciples in a very similar way by Plotinus and al-Junayd. The soul can only return to her goal through the hard method of discipline; by " becoming light and no more heavy," not any more composed, quite simple and one again in an unwavering quest for the One. She has to leave behind the craving of the senses, the promptings of the will, even reason and all those thoughts with which her reason provides her continuously, and even the ideas. Finally, she will leave behind even her consciousness of self in order to sink and lose herself in the One.

Plotinus, as well as al-Junayd, calls this final mystical stage " oblivion " (lete, Fana'). Both Plotinus and al-Junayd describe the struggle of the soul to abide in this union with her interfering weakness, which makes her apt to be separated again, as a painful trial (agon, bala').

The contact and Union, according to both Plotinus and al-Junayd, is not through approach in space, but through similarity; separation is through difference. The soul, according to both, is liable to get tired, and she will find herself separated again. Both thinkers stress the utter difficulty to give an account of the experience, because subject and object were no more while there was One.

The mystic thus will speak in comparisons. Both Plotinus and al-Junayd use the metaphor of Light. Plotinus also has similes for mathematics: " it is like a point in the periphery of a circle falling back into its centre," while such mathematical comparisons are not in al-Junayd though they may be found in later Muslim thinkers. Plotinus' metaphor of the lover and the beloved is known to al-Junayd, and it plays an even more essential part in later Sufism. Both thinkers value the state after the Union positively, not merely negatively. In this state, according to both, the soul will find herself " well ordered and lit up throughout." The soul may well hold memories of her unique experience, principia which will allow the mystic in

this state to be active for the best of his fellow men. Al-Junayd calls this state the State of Sobriety. This expression does not occur in Plotinus, and seems original to al-Junayd.

Both Plotinus and al-Junayd witness that in this state after the mystical Union the soul often "be homesick and in pain, and will long for what she lost. Al-Junayd and Plotinus feel that, when the mystic sees something beautiful in this world, his longing will be awakened and he will feel both joy and sadness. It may happen, for instance, says al-Junayd, when he looks at a beautiful landscape. The soul, according to both, may be able to rise again and reach the state of Union once more. Both Plotinus and al-Junayd consider the mystical gift to be a special grace granted to only a few elect ones. Such men can be led, according to both, by a good teacher and guide on the path. Yet the teacher can lead the disciple only a certain length of the way. Then the disciple will be left to himself and will have to reach his goal alone.

What in fact makes the mystic try to tell of an experience beyond words is his deep concern for his close friends and fellow seekers. The relation between teacher and disciple, Shaykh and murid, becomes of high importance, just as for Plato and Plotinus, so also to the Moslem sufis. To this relation between teacher and disciple we owe the whole mystical esoteric teaching and discipline among the Greeks and in Islam.

After having surveyed the numerous common elements and related notions in Plotinus and al-Junayd regarding the mystical path of the soul, we raise our minds to what is bound to be the first and last for the thinker and for the mystic, the idea of God. In al-Junayd's religious experience, as we have seen throughout his letters, God is all-present, all-seeing, all-active, all-creating. He is victorious, overwhelming. He is close by. He draws his worshipper near and engulfs him in His Presence. He personally elects His worshipper and endows him with super human force to reach Him. He Himself acts in him to bring difference to nought and to bridge the gap.

For Plotinus, on the other hand, God was utterly remote, beyond being, beyond thinking, beyond acting, beyond creating a conception of utter Oneness which caused Plotinus to accept the idea of a mediator, a creator who, thinking and active, " comprises the Universe in his creative thought," the Mind or Nous. Here the difference is fundamental indeed.

This is what we find: Al-Junayd's idea of God shows no influence whatever of the Greek philosophy. His faith in God is purely Islamic: God all-present, creating, preserving, active, victorious, ever near to man, is the idea of God of the Qur'an. God, electing his worshipper, drawing him nigh on the path of the seeker, finally engulfing and overwhelming him and merging him into His Presence this shows the development of Islamic religious experience from the Qur'an to the early sufi mystics. No external philosophical influence can be assumed as an explanation for this development.

We may well feel that no sublimated gnostic theology, no remote Deity such as Plotinus had taught, could influence the strong Muslim conviction alive in al-Junayd.

In realizing this fundamental difference, it becomes more evident that in the doctrine of the Soul and the mystical path the Plotinian influence on al-Junayd seems indeed deep and significant.

We may pause for a moment to consider the question: What attracted the early Muslim mystics to this Neo-platonic philosophy so that they opened their minds to it and became widely and deeply interested ? It may have been, as we feel, this: That there came within their reach a comprehensive and enlightened system of thought, which based itself on the Oneness of God, and which, from this central point, comprised and deduced all spheres of knowledge about the Deity, the Universe and Man. The mystic in primitive Islam had been at first an isolated, groping individual. Then there may have been groups. Some among these early Muslim mystics will have been attracted particularly by the fact that in this sum of Greek knowledge

they found a theory of the nature and potentialities of the soul and of the conditions and stages of the mystical path in one word: A mystical system. Acquaintance with this was like a confirmation of their own quest at a time when they were often misunderstood by their contemporaries. It encouraged them to make conscious to themselves their own mystical experiences, to "speak and write about it," and prudently to teach it to their nearest friends. They would penetrate deeply into those thoughts, pondering, selecting, and together discussing them. The contact of the early muslim mystics with Neo-platonic philosophy made possible the development of a mystical system in Islam, with its discipline and its terminology, thus giving the opportunity for the emergence of mystical schools around the personalities of the early and later sufi thinkers. /

It is known that Greek philosophy, through translations into Arabic, and it may be also through personal contacts, reached Baghdad under the auspices of Khalifs al-Ma'mun and al-Mu'tazim. With regard to Neo-platonism, its influence on later Muslim thinkers and mystics has been established already. The new fact which emerges from our study is that it influenced muslim mystics so essentially at such an early date as we have traced in the thought of al-Junayd.

This brings us back to our comparison between Plotinus and al-Junayd, both of whom were born teachers of men. Plotinus is, first of all, the philosopher who left a comprehensive system of thought on the Universe and man to posterity. He was himself a mystic, and this enabled him to make the mystical experience the crowning feature of his general philosophy. Al-Junayd, on the other hand, was first of all a mystic who, with his mature experience, became a guide to his close circle of friends seekers like himself. His teaching is thus always aphoristic, not systematic. His contact with philosophy may have helped him to develop that deep and subtle knowledge of himself and his fellow men which is characteristic of him, as it is of Socrates. It may have enabled him to communicate in

lucid words his own spiritual life to those who trusted him as a guide and friend. Plotinus' philosophy may have helped him in his endeavours to speak of the mystical experience in its essence and in its stages as clearly as is humanly possible. The clarity of the thinker and teacher, and the sublime, intimate experience of the sufi, are happily integrated in al-Junayd's personality.

Another Letter by ABU'L QASIM AL-JUNAYD to ONE OF HIS FELLOW MYSTICS

May the beauty of that which God, the Magnificent, the Resplendent, has granted you, shine before you undimmed. May He grant you the clear perception of that which He has specially chosen for you and vouchsafed to you. May God reveal to you the true nature of your creation. May God prefer you by that gift which is not granted to others but is kept specially for you. May He bring you near unto Him, close to Him before Him, may He bring you nigh unto Him. May He grant you the joys of familiarity in proximity to Him, and may He commune with you. May He choose for you His beauteous behests and be your intimate! May God grant you His aid in those significant stations, the state of proximity to Him, through His gifts of strength, assurance, quietness, acquiescence and composure. May God grant all this to you so that the ideas which occur to you and the revelations which reach you are not too much for you! When God first became your intimate it is so overpowering that amazement and astonishment overwhelm you in your ineffable discovery.

How can this be described, or the intellect perceive it, unless it be that God grants His control to the perception and His care to its secrets ? Where are you when God has taken you entirely to Himself and has received before Him that of you which He desires? When He has granted you the indulgence

of His communion and favoured you with the ability to answer Him? In this state you are spoken to and you speak; you are asked about yourself and you ask questions. The words communicated are as unique pearls, testimony upon testimony, a cloud of witnesses multiplying continually, harbingers of divine grace. They are as heavy rain from every side, generous donors to you of glory from God the glorious. Were it not for God's gift of grace and His vouchsafing His holy spirit then would man's mind be completely stupefied before Him and his perception, in the presence of God, utterly shattered. For God, may His praise be exalted and His holy name be sanctified, is the generous benefactor of him who puts his trust in Him and cossets him to whom He has granted the gift of companionship.

God carries for them that burden which He has undertaken and they bear that which He desires them to carry. To them has He granted the privilege of perceiving Him.

May God grant us and you the station of the elect nigh unto Him!

Verily my Lord hearkens unto prayer and is nigh unto His worshippers.

The Letter 'ABU'L QASIM AL-JUNAYD IBN MUHAMMAD to YAHYA IBN MU'ADH OF RAYY God have mercy on them both

May you not be absent from Him who sees you by the barrier of yourself, and may that barrier not prevent Him from seeing you!

May you not change when God translates you from your present state, and may your state remain essentially constant when God translates you from your normal self!

May you not be far removed from the true perception of God's revelation to you and may God's revelation to you not be far removed by the absence of revelation to you!

May you continue in timelessness to apprehend timelessness when you too are in your eternal state. May the Eternal always

be your support for that of you which persists eternally!
Thus, then, you are in your pristine state, in the state before you had existence, in union with God but separate, and in that unity supported by God with no witness to see you.
May you not lose your spiritual individuality when you are absent from your temporal individuality as a result of the unknown when you are absent! In this state "where?" has no special significance since the concept of whereness is meaningless for the omnipresent. (If we say) God destroys (whereness) the destruction is itself destroyed in the eternity (implicit) in God, who brings all things to an end.
The union of that which has been separated and the separation of that which was in union with Him, are both ideas of Separation implicit in perfect union with God. Thus it is that union takes place through itself and for itself. It is union with God which God has made.

Another Utter by ABU'L QASIM AL-JUNAYD to ONE OF HIS FELLOW MYSTICS

May you continue, O created being, to remain at the gate of God, by His help and through His grace directed towards Him, seeking that which is of God's love in you. May you continue to enjoy those aspects of God and His extraordinary revelation which He vouchsafes, that love of God in you, which God's love grants to you, and whereby He brings you near unto Him. God has chosen that in you which He desires in order that He may select you for that special gift which He has chosen for you. First God chooses you, then He causes to appear before you that with which He intends to endow you: with this He overwhelms you in the magnificence of His revelation, elevating you high above the vision of your fellow men, concealing your true nature from them. He withholds from them the knowledge of your (high) status and in His graciousness to you. He reveals to you the essence of the secrets of your status.

In this state you are in a place which its creator has buried away and hidden. He has concealed all traces of it from the perception of him who would perceive it. Thus, in this state, you are in the unseen world of whose true nature there can be neither doubt nor denial.

These are truths which can be apprehended with certainty, though direct vision of them is (by their very nature) denied to physical perception. Over and above these truths are to be found the Unity of God, the dominion of His divinity. His separateness from the beginning and for ever, the perpetuity of His eternal continuance. Here, then, is the perception of those that understand shackled and the learning of the learned halted. This is the objective of the wisdom of the wise. (This is as far as words can take us.) What has been described is of the highest elevation and is as far as we can go since man's description of God is limited subjectively.

This, then (the limitation by man's perceptual range), is the gulf which divides the spiritual from the material until the day of resurrection. On this day, after humanity has passed a time in that gulf, when they have been brought back from the dead, they will know and recognize the gift of life and the donor of it. Their life is eternal and persists for ever by God's decree. In what preceeds, I have only indicated what can be described at great length, but in this essay there is no place for a full description.

O! my Brother may God be pleased with you I have received your letter which I was delighted both to read and interpret. I rejoiced in it from the beginning to the end. I was happy to discover the esoteric knowledge, fine wisdom, indications both clear and illuminating. That which you indicated was not concealed from me and I saw clearly that which was clearly described. All this reached my comprehension since I knew in advance the object which you sought. It is clear to me whether the thought leads, the object of its train as well as its origin, where the thought begins and where it ends and

what happens to him in whom God inspires this train of thought. May you never lack the closest bonds with God, their continued existence through Him with Him. The conquering victories have prevailed, the clear manifestations have appeared and lead to the strength of their dominion, a dominion which is maintained by that constant victory resulting there from. These victories multiply and remain hidden, although in fact they are revealed in strength. These victories prevail against every onslaught, gloriously conquering without " where " and without " whether " essentially without progress to an objective and not leading to a limited destination which can be defined. These victories are completely overwhelming and universal. Aha! and what can come after this? God has made them a target for Bald' and the object of His trial and banishment. He has brought upon them trials which were pre-ordained. He gives them unadulterated death for a potion and causes to happen to them that which He wills. Some there are who try to hold off the decree, who are pertinacious but are conquered, others accept without a struggle. Neither the one who accepts escapes through his resignation, nor does he who struggles get freedom from Bald' through his pertinacity. Their life's break is imprisoned by its very nature. At the height of Bald' they are restrained. They choke as they drink that bitter and deadly draught, they are face to face with death. If the spirit man can be said to pass away, perhaps that is its rest, but in death, the very pain of the taste of death imprisons. The soul and the hope of ultimate salvation after death is gone. But before death, their only course is Bald .

O! my Brother, I have been able but to describe a few aspects of these people. I would not lengthen my discourse with a further description of their state. There are some who have heard an account of what these men have undergone, and before what ultimate realities they have come. These onlookers conceive the ambition of seeking after that elevated aim before they have passed through the state of reality (which precedes

it). They are confused in their appreciation since the incorrect states appear to them like the correct states while the height of complete proximity to God is concealed from them. What happens to them is what would be expected for them, and error is continuous throughout their days. For themselves, they thought that they were of the elect, but in fact they were not. They were convinced that they had achieved a high state, a false conviction which goes with their present state.

Alas, alas! How far indeed are they from achieving that eminence! How grievous their error of judgment of their own attainment! May God protect us and you, my brother, from being in a state which is not compatible with genuine reality, and not closely associated with that which God has established. In spite of what I have said about this state and what appertains to it, it is none the less an intermediate stage between two states. When it is revealed it shows itself to be a separate state between two stages. God's intention with regard to it was not in itself, but when truly achieved, it reveals in its turn, the next stage. It is only after this stage has been traversed that it is possible to have the knowledge of the great, the stages of the noble, the place of the wise, and the true exposition of the understanding of the learned. This final stage is one which, when a man thinks of it, and tries to describe it, or has the intention of explaining some of it, then " their faces are downcast before the Living, the Existing, they are undone by their burden of iniquity."

O! my Brother! May I not miss the point of that which you indicate which God has revealed to you! May I always have happiness from you when you reach the goal which God has revealed to you. You are indeed one of my close companions, you share in my longings and are one of the leaders of my fellowship. You are of the friends of the heart for whom my devotion is sincere. Are you not one of those that remain of our brotherhood, one of us who has been singled out? Are you not the recipient of that Grace of God who benefits us all ? O! my Brother! Please continue your grace, your condescension,

your good deeds, your writing to us and your communicating with us. We derive great joy from your good news and are delighted that you continue alive. We rejoice in the greatness of God's gift to you! Should you consider us worthy please continue to enlighten us as your duty, but if you cannot find us worthy, please continue to enlighten us out of the goodness of your heart, a gracious gift from you to us. To you, then, be the peace of God and His mercy, and on all our brotherhood.

Copy of the Utter (Kitab) by AL-JUNAYD to 'AMR IBN 'UTHMAN AL-MAKKI May God grant (this) mercy to both May you reach the highest peak of acquired knowledge and inborn wisdom, may you achieve the highest possible state of confident knowledge! May God bring you into His intimate companionship and may you be of those who are nearest to Him! May God grant you familiarity with the finest of His revelations so that you have complete comprehension of them! So that you have this knowledge with confidence and comprehension. May you achieve the highest pinnacle of its perfection and have that clear and dominant view which comes from the comprehensive knowledge which you have achieved, which God may grant you abundantly. Once you have achieved this confident knowledge you will no longer need to seek after God because by means of this knowledge you will see the Truth directly. Moreover, where opinions differ in the realm of scientific knowledge, you, for your part, possess perfect certainty.

Thus, then, does God make of you one who helps his brethren to achieve the object of knowledge by his explanation and comment. The true and satisfying conclusions are revealed to them by the means of his discourse. His status is a happy source of pride both to those who can be with him when he teaches and also to those who are absent. Surely God has made you a light whose brilliance fills the universe, whose brightness

risers and illuminates all heaven and earth. Thus all creatures can achieve their perfect happiness, felicity, and attain that noble, all-embracing aim they seek (and these then) are the manifest signs within which the chosen teacher is clothed, the external appearances in which he is dressed. When this is seen (it must be realized that) restraint in its appearance happens, it is withheld, barred and hidden so as not to appear. This is a secret which so bewilders the mind that it cannot explain it. Such inspiration is granted to few, it is withheld and reined and kept back from most. This is a secret which intellect alone cannot perceive, which understanding (academically) cannot achieve. Alas, alas! the most learned are sealed off from this knowledge, the comprehension of the greatest doctors cannot attain it. For God is unique, is single and exalted and removes the nature of His existence in the sight of man by denying him His vision. How many an aspirant in God in his mind, and how many that would show their inspiration, when they try to prove the bounty that is theirs, when they try to describe their privilege, can only babble and show their perplexity and are so bewildered that they cannot explain it. In spite of their thoughts their words require interpretation.

When the ignorant man hears the discourse of the learned, he thinks he understands his point, but in reality (the learned man is also) in utter darkness and does not fully appreciate the subject of his discourse. In the midst of his discourse he is impelled by the essential truth of his subject and draws the listeners' attention to attempting to understand the words he uses and to follow out the verbal positive commands and observe the prohibitions. But this is only part of knowledge. When you are yourself satisfied that you have certain knowledge, this knowledge is part of you before you have imparted to others what this knowledge demands. Of necessity its advantage and its light through its mark is clearly apparent to you. This is the verdict of knowledge against you when its mark is clearly apparent in you. Therefore, beware O thou who hast donned

the garb of learning, whom his fellow men point out as a scholar, but who falls short of knowledge in its pure reality. Be aware of what I have said and be wary of public fame. This is but the bitter death of the type of scholar I have described, and God's verdict against him.

When the scholar hears the discourse pronounced by the wise man, when he actually has heard the exposition which he expounds to him, he bows his head lost in thought and then after concentration he sobs and his tears last a long time, his sobbing is intense. He is most deeply distressed. At that point the wise man approaches him and says: " Now (that you realize your shortcomings), when the sun of wisdom rises it will shine on you, the rays of its light will reach you. And then the darkness of your ignorance within the sphere of your knowledge will be illuminated, those things which you have overlooked and which bar your way to full comprehension will be removed. And I hope that thereby, that the things you have spoilt will be set right, that which you have lost from your keeping will be restored to you."

Now when the scholar hears this approach to him by the wise man his distress is assuaged and he ceases from his bitter tears. Then he turns to the wise man and says: " Give me more of this medicine because it has cured my wound, and my hope and desire to answer my problem is now intensified.

And save me by your kindly treatment and your gentle wisdom from the confusion which you know so well to be hidden in my secret soul, from those evil desires concealed within me.

In the past up till now there was concealed from me those hidden things within me (which were denied to me). You have revealed them to me by your excellent description of them.

You have enabled me to perceive by your kindly gentleness that which was concealed." The wise man then said to him:

" First you must praise God always for granting you the revelation of this and for his putting you in a position to perceive that which you lacked. Stand abased and humble before Him.

Approach Him with quietness and humility, and pray to Him. Surely, then, your communing will not be concealed from Him and He will hear your prayer. When you have reached this stage you have obtained thereby an intercessor with Him. For surely you must realize that the speech of the wise is void except when it is permitted by God. When the wise speaks he who listens profits. This aspect of the grace of God to His creatures is like the rain from the heavens which God sends down to revive the dead earth. You surely know the verse in the Qur'an: 'Look, then, at the signs of the Mercy of God, how He revives the earth after it has died. God surely revives the dead. He can do all things.' In the same way God will give new life by means of the speech of the wise to that faculty of perception in the hearts of those who had been heedless which they had slain by turning away from Him."

The scholar said to the wise man: "Yes, indeed, your description fits him perfectly. I now can hope from what you have said in your wisdom and in your exceedingly generous kindness that you will liberate me by your guidance from the sorry plight of my ineptitude, that you will extricate me from the depression brought on by my lack of progress by means of the opportunity of meeting you. Now I realize that my object is to discover what it was in me which led to that sorry plight when I did not practise what I knew, when I failed to keep up with the demands of my knowledge, to discover that which was hidden in my own soul, that which was concealed and overlaid within my innermost secret consciousness. This is an object which I have not yet attained nor is my knowledge sufficient to enable me to reach it. Now, in so far as God has helped me through you, I see more clearly. God has granted me this that His revelation to me by you shows me something of that which I seek. And with the limited knowledge at my disposal I realize how very much more there is to be known which I have not attained. There are recondite and hidden mysteries which I have neither seen nor known. So, O wise man, reveal

to me my present spiritual state which you know better than I do. For surely the physician knows more about the ailment of the sick man than the sick man himself, and is in a better position to diagnose the cause of the illness and prescribe the treatment to cure him."

The wise man said to him; " Knowledge begins to dawn on you which will enable you to understand what is due from you and to you in this matter. The first glimmer of spiritual awareness lights the way to your perception and you are now rousing yourself to move towards that which is concealed in your innermost soul. You must realize that the spirit is heir to greater ills than the body can sustain. The diseases of the limbs and the organs are easier to cure than the illness of hearts and minds. For the diseases of religion and the afflictions to which faith is liable are a cause of destructions and lead their victims to Hellfire and expose them to the anger of the Almighty. Indeed the illnesses which afflict the spirit are in quite a different category from the illnesses and diseases which happen to the physical body, which are afflictions for whose cure there is hope, whose ill effects can be overcome. In any event you may still hope for God's reward.

" You must realize that the learned physician who is experienced and the wise and educated man who gives counsel are in a better position to understand the illnesses of the body and the diseases which occur affecting faith. The reason is that when they give an opinion it is the fruit of their personal experience, whereas the person who is himself afflicted is unable to describe his illness accurately. The diagnosis made by the informed, experienced and perspicacious physician reveals to those who are ill what they themselves have suffered and indicates to them those features which they have missed. So that what is described in words is as vivid as if it were before their eyes.

" And now I shall describe to you, in this manner, certain features which will give you encouragement and grant you all that which you seek in your question. May God grant us the

necessary strength.”

Know, then, a scholar concerned with knowledge, that when you wake up you will realize in what intoxicated perplexity you were, when you come to become aware of your overwhelming ignorance. When you remember exactly what you thought you will realize the harm of your forgetfulness. When all is well, and you are recovered, you will be able to appreciate how ill you were.

Know that all this is a preoccupation which, when present, prevents you from having true knowledge of God, is hurtful to those who have it in so far as they become clothed as it were in perplexity. Yet this knowledge of the state of being clothed in confusion and lost in darkness is one which God brings about in the worshipper and makes a fixed stage in his sufi experience, a valid argument on the day of judgment.

So do not worry about this you who are so concerned, who are so anxious quickly to get rid of it, nor should you worry about the confusion of intoxication, of being overwhelmed, of being in a state of forgetfulness and perplexity when you come to practise through what I am about to describe to you, when you hasten towards the goal towards which I encourage you, when you seek early to achieve that which I indicate to you. For surely the purity of Sidq, and the completeness of your devotion to your object, will lead you to that place which is at once the entrance gate to that which you love and the exit from that which you dislike. Nor will it bar your way from achieving that which you desire for in God is surely the source of all strength unless you lack perseverance in your efforts, which God requires. So beware and then again beware lest you should be found in any way lacking, lest I should meet you and find you lax and your efforts slackened. For it is your sincerity in maintaining absolute purity in your perseverance on which you ride the course to your desired objective. Thus, then, I have placed you on the right path, or on the first step of the ascent and you are now well on the road.

Now know, O you who are cautious, devoted and assiduous, that the circumstance which prevents you and those in your state from achieving your goal after you have acquired the necessary intellectual appreciation through constant long hours of study and protracted meditation in collating your knowledge and increasing its field, is your inclination towards indirect sophistical interpretation and your predilection for worldly standards of which you yourself are unaware. Now there are many types of those devoted to indirect interpretation. There is the type who is aware of his own failings and recognizes his hidden fallibilities, but none the less continues to interpret indirectly, to rely on fallible knowledge and from time to time forgets the inherent weakness in his method of deducing knowledge. There is also the type that favours indirect interpretation with the objective of clear and proven truth in his deduction. But in this process he cannot escape his own unwitting prejudice which must influence him in his aim. As a result he has an overweening trust in the conclusions which he achieves and relies on them exclusively. Such, then, is his position. The conclusion then to which his indirect interpretation has led him is in accordance with our first description and he appreciates what is concealed within himself, what is hidden in his soul, since he has used knowledge as an instrument, and a means thereto. He has donned the raiment of knowledge, put on its clothes and reveals in his indirect interpretation the traces of his knowledge. He calls the attention of the world to his interpretation, gives his name to the views he holds and expounds them to the people. Now when his position becomes known, when his fame spreads abroad and people come to him he is personally delighted with his following and flattered by the praise of the ignorant praise which he scarcely deserves. This public approval breeds confidence in his method of interpretation and he claims for himself a position he does not rightly deserve. His head is turned by the continued chorus of applause, the deepness of their respect for him, the awe with

which they speak of his findings and he has credit for that which God knows to be the very reverse of that which is concealed deep within him. When he has established his reputation with the common people and the ignorant, and the multitude who praise him wrongly and in error, he looks to a reward for publishing his knowledge and is pleased with his immediate reward for his knowledge. He has become a vendor of knowledge at a cheap price, of little account. He accepts the ephemeral in exchange for the eternal, in exchange for the garments which God bestows as a reward for right action. He becomes of the number of those whom God reprimands in the Qur'an about whom He has told us through the tongue of Muhammad. The verse runs " Moreover, when God entered into a covenant with those to whom the book was given that they should expound it to their fellow men, and not conceal it, they cast it behind their backs and sold it for a sorry price. How bad was the transaction! " And again we have the verse: " And they have had successors to succeed them, they have inherited the Book and taken the ephemeral good things of this world saying the while ' ultimately we shall surely be forgiven,' but Still they continue to seize on the ephemeral attractions as they did before." But God holds their action to be wrong and states His view explicitly in the Qur'an. He stresses this point for those of his worshippers who understand. The responsibility that goes with knowledge is made abundantly clear beyond all later possibility of debate or pretext however specious. Moreover, God continues to give us the stories of the prophets on whom be peace! and describes for us their qualities. He tells us of His covenant with them, that they should give over the things of this world and devote themselves with all their might to the external things of the spirit. This they do without the condition of a price, without the desire for a reward. For surely the prerogative of knowledge which carries with it the responsibility of instructing the laity is of its very nature without worldly reward, but carries with it the raiments of God

and a home in that garden of paradise which He has made a home for those that trust in Him and obey Him. God says to Muhammad: " Say: I ask no wage of you for this, nor am I one of the specious pretenders," and elsewhere He says: " Say: I ask no wage of you for this except that you should love your relatives." Similarly in the stories of the prophets recounted in the Qur'an we read that Noah said: " I ask of you no reward for this, nor do I desire to." There is another verse: "My reward cometh only from Him who created me." And there are many such verses in the Qur'an. Such, then, was the conduct of the prophets among the nations and the manner of life of the learned among the people that they took no price for the knowledge which they imparted, and asked for no reward for their teaching. For surely a reward which the learned take for imparting knowledge is an unlawful profit, as is that reward which the Rabbis and the Jewish wise men took though they had specifically forbidden it. In support of this we read in the Qur'an: " Had not their Rabbis and sages forbidden them from saying lies and consuming unlawful profits, surely that which they had done would be Evil! " There are indeed many stories about the forbidding of the acceptance of this type of reward. An exhaustive argument of this point would be extremely long, but what has been explained is sufficient and adequate, " God is the guide." And as for that section of the learned community which expounds and is of the opinion that its exposition is the truth exclusively, they have come to the wrong conclusion, because knowledge of the truth escapes them. The doubts and difficulties which they experience are that aspect of their error which shows up only after they have become involved in that error and confused in its evil implications. These people are they who have based their guidance on the exposition of men whose counsel though sincere is wanting, men whose fate it is not to light on the ultimate truth which they seek. They aver: " Mankind has the greatest need for our knowledge. The purpose of our knowledge is the

establishment of righteousness for all mankind, by which is meant respect of the leaders, consultation with them and modelling our lives after theirs. So also should we respect the princes and the chiefs and the aristocracy." Therefore, they seek out and co-operate with the caliphs, the princes, the learned and the aristocracy.

This action they suppose to be for God's sake and they hope that it will have its reward. They reckon it to be one of the loftiest actions of the very highest degree and carrying the richest reward. It is, however, to the mighty that they bring their knowledge and by means of it they knock at their gates. They seek strenuously to pass on their knowledge to those who have neither asked them for it nor asked them to come to them nor respect them for it. To begin with, they must have the humility of the suppliant and ask of the chamberlains permission to enter; they must suffer the humiliation of long waiting at the door, where after some are permitted entry and others rejected. Those that are rejected are humiliated, punished, mortified and return to their homes made low and mean. In this wise they continue the labour of going and returning, going and returning this is the cause of their ruin and destruction till finally they achieve that after which they sought. But they have forgotten God whom they worshipped originally and it is this forgetfulness and neglect which carry in their train the paths of death. They are overwhelmed by the afflictions and diseases of the soul. Their perception and their minds are seduced by the wealth which the mighty have acquired in this temporal world and they come to prefer the things of this world to the next because of their tinsel-shine, their fresh charm, the magic of their perfume.

And know, O seeker after the preference and glory which knowledge inspires, O searcher for intimacy with God by means of good works exclusively for God, that the feet of the people have strayed from the right paths and that their hearts are not evenly balanced in their search after their real objective. They

have turned aside and follow subconscious motives distracted by superficial beauty and misled by the ambition of fame, the desire of public respect and honour which is the due of that knowledge which they seek. We see them delighting in the concourse gathered before them to hear their wisdom, delighting in public recognition and reference to them as authorities, scholars whose views are decisive and whose dicta are final. Their ambition has become overweening and their appetite for praise unsated. If they do not receive this recognition they are dissatisfied, if they do not achieve what they delight in, they are angry. Do not dare to ask them about the excess of their anger or station, they blame all who would oppose their capricious desires. It would be possible to describe their extreme emotionalism in all they do at considerable length, but I have contented myself with what springs to my lips. I trust that the flow of my description and account is an ample sufficiency for you! And therefore put on now the garments of caution, don the clothes of fear and take unto yourself the shield of reverence. Stand before God in constant servitude, examine your heart constantly, weigh your actions deliberately, energetically pursue the performance of good actions and be completely sincere in seeking your aim. And all this while let your spiritual and inner aim go hand in hand with a constant awareness of God and complete concentration of Him. Be then one who devotes to God that complete energy and devotion which is due to Him, one whom God praises of the number of His sincere worshippers who will receive His glorious promise and His rich reward. We read in the Qur'an (29.69); " These who have striven towards us shall we surely lead on our paths for God is always with the righteous " and again (4.62): " Had they done that to which they had been exhorted, it would have gone better with them and their faith more firmly founded." Now these two verses give the key to the attainment of goodness and the achievement of correct and straight guidance. So take unto yourself as much as you can of what these verses teach and

persist in God's teaching which is revealed in them. And be particularly careful in the light of what has gone before in your handling of exegesis of holy texts. Beware of misunderstandings which may well invalidate the whole of your religious practice and lead to nothing but chagrin.

The scholar then said to him: " O, wise man, you have spoken of the very matter which was in my mind and attained to the uttermost doubts which exercised me. What is more, you have described things whose value I perceived but dimly. This I regard as both grace and mercy from God to me. Surely, God has made you the means of bringing to my notice essential matters the gift of which is God's grace to me through your agency. Were it not for this gift I should have been lacking in understanding and like those whom you have described. By means of your sincere teaching you have enabled me to avoid their errors and misunderstanding. That which God has endowed me with through you is a gracious gift. He has raised my appreciation of the teaching for which He has found you a fit and worthy channel. I refer to that part of your teaching which explains and expounds the three types of school wear and reveals what is wrong in their approach, where they deviate from the right path in religious practice, where they have strayed from the road. I was in sore need that you should describe to me the nature of those whose worship of God is based on true knowledge, those who fulfill their religious obligations as they should, those for whom to know the right is to do the right. Those who fulfill their obligation to pass on their knowledge and who are praised when they spread that knowledge abroad and make it known to their fellow men. Their purpose in giving this instruction is a religious one, altruistic, piously directed and of good name. These are men who are not influenced by greed nor deceived by a show of tinsel, who are not the prey of desire, nor slaves to their appetites, nor led astray by the world. They err not nor do they sin and are abundantly aware of what they are about."

Then spake the wise man and said: " Rejoice in that God has Opened for you the gate of questioning and enabled you to couch your questions clearly. This will surely God willing lead you to carry out good works, to give virtue the substance of action and, as is my pious hope, will lead you by smooth paths to full sincerity of worship. Seek then the Lord whole heartedly and in the acquisition of wisdom and devotion to that branch of it which attracts you, beware lest your inmost self becomes a victim of those ills which will deny you true wisdom. Learn to control your innermost perceptions for verily wisdom for those who desire its comprehension and those who hotly seek its acquisition can be more loving, more affectionate, and more devoted than the most tender of mothers and gentle of fathers."

And now I see learning like heavy clouds wide spread above you, rich with the promise of life-giving water, their deep shadows foretelling imminent rain and your hopes high for it. Seek, then, the rain which is in these clouds and wait patiently where it will fall. And make you plea to God who brings on the rain, who spreads wide the clouds, who removes famine, who gives freedom to the bound.

And know that God gives life to the dead desert places by a drop of her merciful rain which he causes to fall upon them. Seek out these places which require and receive the life-giving rain and you, too, will be well watered. For surely the first light showers from these clouds will cure your ills and the steady rain which follows will wash away from your innermost being the leaning towards the things of this world. When this rain pours on your body it will wash away from you all your spiritual afflictions and when you taste it its exquisite flavour will kill all passion within your soul.

And know that when the Almighty likes one of His worshippers He makes his path to God easy and clears this road of obstacles. He makes the time of his journey short and brings him to the glorious home and vouchsafes to him an exceeding

reward.

I hope that God who has inspired you to ask such pointful questions and endowed you with such clarity of purpose in this conversation we have had will grant you by His grace and mercy the status of those selected by Him from the number of His saints and familiars who themselves have been chosen by God from among His worshippers.

And now if God will shall describe to you the nature of those who know the truth (AHL-UL-HAQA'IQ) among the learned who practise their learning and whose devotion to it is complete, whose every effort is devoted to fulfilling the obligations implicit in their learning, who seek learning without any ulterior motive, and who, in their seeking, are not deceived into following earthly appetites nor so influenced thereby that they do not achieve the essence of that knowledge. Nor do the wily distractions of this world touch them. " These are the truly godly who shall flourish." Know, then, that the genuine scholar, prior to starting his searches for God, must in the first place have the right attitude and the correct objective. He must constantly observe what is taking place within his soul, and keep close watch on his desire to seek God as it emerges. Nor will these genuine scholars permit their feet to take a step forward or any of their limbs to make any movement at all before their decision has been, in their own view, adjudged to be a valid point of departure. They then undertake their search for God in the light of what learning has taught them basically and they continue in this wise and in accordance with the testimonies of learning. Now the nature of that which God gives them in the beginning makes their hearts sensitive, cautious and fearful, all three qualities being present together and restraining their physical movements, controlling their inward thoughts, and staying silent for long periods. None the less, they fear that they may have fallen short of that which God expects of them by way of effort in their seeking after knowledge and they redouble their efforts and, in seeking after knowledge,

they achieve that state wherein the name of God is on their lips and their minds constantly upon God. This will protect them from familiarity with the company of those who seek after knowledge, that accompany them on the road. Thus it is that they themselves are in a state which is quite different from that of those who are with them. Whenever any folly issues from this company they turn aside, whenever there comes from them any sinful neglect or diversion they become fearful and attentive. Whenever a disturbance arises from company they concentrate on maintaining their own attitude and redouble their hold on themselves. They pray to God for His guidance for those in their company and hope for their good and that they should stay on the right path. They bring no harm to their fellow men nor do they speak evil of them, they do not malign them nor blame them, but if they should see evil in them they have pity for them and pray for them when they become aware of their deficiencies. They recognize what is evil, reject it and avoid it, they recognize what is good, approve it and practise it. They do not despise those that have deficiencies because they recognize such weaknesses as universal. Nor do they detract from the laudable virtues which are possessed by those who are inferior to them, on the contrary they acknowledge these qualities to the full. That which God has implanted in their fellow men is abundantly clear to them. They know, through their true knowledge, how to assess the validity or invalidity of the claims of their fellow men, how to retain their equanimity at all times whenever they perceive that which is reprehensible in their fellow men. In all that they do they are led by pity for their fellow men and complete trust in God and they are devoted to seeking true knowledge. While they study true knowledge their tongues pronounce praise of their God, their hearts hasten to put into practice that which they learn, their ears listen and are fully receptive, and their bodies press on to the service of God may He be exalted! When they gather true knowledge their conduct is fine and when they understand it they acknowledge

that this is a grace of God's to them. Nor do they cease to be assiduous in their seeking after knowledge and extreme devotion to it and they are constantly in the company of him who has true knowledge until they themselves have obtained the fullest part of it, the greatest share of it. When they have achieved that which they sought for as aid and the object which they required, when they have achieved that state of knowledge in the light of whose truths they can act at all times, then do they return to the reconsideration of what they have written and the reassessment of the aim to which they directed their writing. It is this state which withdraws them from contact with the community and which causes them to dwell in seclusion worshipping God. Then the need of the people for them is real and their status as those fully devoted to the search after the true knowledge of God is recognized and the level of their attainment in that knowledge is known.

Their superiority is recognized and respected universally, their status as it were sallies forth into the world where it is accepted on all sides. Some are completely devoted to their studies, ignoring the mass of humanity in their preoccupation with the worship of God, giving preference to those holy works which God reveals to them by means of the knowledge they acquire and refusing any substitute for the worship of God, rejecting any change from that isolation revealed to them by God. And others are inclined to spread their knowledge, have the urge to teach it, and find in teaching their greatest virtue. They therefore are happy to spread their knowledge for God's sake, and are completely devoted therein. They seek to obtain God's greatest regard and hope for a blessed return to Him in the hereafter. In this they are never without God's right guidance. As a result, whatever they may say is by virtue of their knowledge and their silence, is deference to their maturity. When they seek to give an explanation it is well within the comprehension of their audience and when many people gather round them they are happy to serve them, and when they are

about to leave they give them their counsel. They pass on such knowledge as they have acquired in simple language soundly expounded, their counsel comes from the heart and their words are exact. They are patient with the uninitiated and do not hold error against those that err and have missed the point. None the less they never pretend to agree with anyone who is wrong. They forgive those that do them wrong and give to those who have withheld from them, they requite good for evil, they overlook those that trespass against them, they do not seek for their actions a reward from man, nor are they concerned either with praise or commendation. All their energies are concentrated on God in all their actions and with complete sincerity.

With their good works they seek God. They do not accept world things from those who offer them out of their generosity, nor do they long for free-will offerings. They see the world in that perspective ordained by God and are content with the portion with which God has provided them. They do not occupy themselves with what is not lasting nor do they toil with what is ephemeral. He turns his desire away from the trapping of this world and turns his back on the beckoning of its bright fascination. A little, provided that it is pure, satisfies him, he is content with what is sound and upright, he abstains from anything doubtful and he turns his back on complex matters even to the extent that he does not take advantage of certain things which are explicitly lawful and is chary in his approach to what is indispensable. Of all that the world can offer and all that is therein he prefers abstinence and adherence to constant and active worship of God. He has pity for those who are taken up with the things of this world and is sorry for those whose attitude to the world is demanding. He does not consider this world to be an adequate portion for those that seek it nor a fair price in return for the effort of those that devote themselves to it. He looks on this world fully conscious of its transience and aware of its imminent disintegration. This is the limited significance of the world in his opinion and its status so far as

his knowledge is concerned. And this person, over and above what I have already described, is always alone and much in retirement, continually devoted to his worship of God. He finds spiritual satisfaction, happiness and inner content in confirming his good works in the direction of his Master and his hope for reward is fixed on his return to God in the next world. When he comes out of retirement to appear before those who have come to him to seek that perfected knowledge which he has, he does so with complete concentration and genuine good will. He regards this as a pious and good work. Moreover, he is always in a state of concentration on the main objective, when he is in retirement he is completely occupied with the worship of God, making every effort to approach closer to Him. Thus it is, that this state of consciousness of purpose to come nigh unto God is also realized when he comes before his fellow men to spread abroad the learning he has, and to be a teacher of that which God has taught him. At all times he is afraid of God and hears him, a cautious and respectful awareness of God and ever present with him. He does that which his knowledge demands and is just both in advice and in his decisions. He is one of the experts in religious law, and in what is permitted and what is forbidden and of the best informed in all matters pertaining to Islam. He walks in the footsteps of the prophets and follows the way of life of the saints and the righteous, he does not stray after those innovations (which, through contrary to tradition, have gained a measure of currency in Islam), nor does he refrain from accepting the agreed tradition of Islam. In learning he is expert, well grounded and strong and his attitude is clear, explicit and balanced. He does not side with any sect and is meticulous in adopting only the most valuable view. He has no leaning towards scholastic theology, never does it occur to him to consider it, he does not attack authority nor say evil of it, but he would like to see civil authority upright in every sphere. He holds the view that authority must be obeyed, nor will he separate himself from the

community. He holds that rebellion against authority is an action of the ignorant who are not righteous, of those who have gone astray and are in error, those who seek rebellion and are enamoured of corruption in this world. These are they who are hostile criminals, who do wrong, who are in error, these are they who follow a path which is not that of right guidance, they are associated with error and distraction and in their rebellion against authority they turn their attention to worldly things. Now God has raised the status of the learned above these things and has made them leaders in the right path, good counsellors both pious and trusting in God, sincere, exceptional and outstanding, fine gentlemen, great, merciful, generous and saintly. God has made them unfurled flags of truth, lighthouses erected for guidance, made up paths for humanity. These are indeed the scholars among the Muslims, the truly trusting among the faithful, the noblest of those who are pious. They are those who guide in the crises of religion, and theirs is the light which leads in the darkness of ignorance, the brilliance of their knowledge shines through darkness. God has made them the symbol of His mercy for His creatures, and a blessing for those of humanity who so choose. They are the instruments whereby He instructs the ignorant, reminds the negligent, guides the seeker aright, grants to those who have through them are good works increased, and the noble state in religion reached, the traveller on the toad of religion is encouraged by them and those whose religion is strong and complete are made firm by them. These are they who have filled and beautified their lives with consciousness of God (text, dhikr li'llah, an allusion to the practice of dhikr). They pass their lives in good and fine works and thus they leave behind them for their fellow men a praise worthy memory and the brilliance of their light shines clearly for their fellow creatures. He who makes a choice from the brilliance of their light is illuminated thereby, he who follows in their footsteps is guided on the right path, he who follows their mode of life will be happy and never depressed. God has

granted them everlasting life and the fulfilment of a peaceful death and they find that their good works performed during their lifetime accompany them to the next world and give them pleasure. God has made the completion of their lives their best moment and their spiritual state at death most elevated.

And now, you who have asked me about the quality of the genuinely learned who act according to their knowledge during their lifetime; I have described for you something of their nature and given you a considerable description of their fine actions. Had it been my wish to give you an exhaustive description of them and the account of them which they merit,

my letter would have been very long and my answer far larger.

What God has inspired me to mention on this subject is sufficient for one who is on the right path and adequate means to attain the ultimate good for him who performs that which is preferable.

The learned man said to the wise man: " O, gentle and merciful teacher, instructor of good counsel and of wisdom, your description of these people has made my heart worry and you have filled my breast with fear. By your description I know my status and my rank and I fear that my knowledge which I now have may be beyond my endurance, because of what you have made clear about the extremity of my incompetence and the persistence of my being left behind. When I became aware of what you say I deposed myself, and became convinced of my misfortune and inadequacy. How, then, can I find a way out of the baseness of being backward, a road of departure from the blameworthy qualities which I have, a point of entry to initiation on to the path of the initiated. For in my view to withhold myself from this step is a sin, and to remain in the state in which I am now is a complete loss."

The wise man said to him: "You must realize that you asked about an exalted matter, an elevated and enormous subject. It is easy for those who practise its virtues to overcome fearful obstacles in their search for it, to carry great burdens and to bear exile from their native land and to dispense with

property. Few indeed are they whose love for God is so strong that God has made it easy for them to give up their bodies and their very lives, for whom the achievement of their desire overrides everything. O, questioner about the status of the elect, about the ranks of the learned and the states of the great leaders, those that follow in the footsteps of the prophets, set about giving up everything which might divert you from the path of the initiated, which might hold you back from God's guidance and from righteousness. Be zealous towards God and in that which will bring you nigh unto Him. Know that your devoted attention to anything in this world, whether it be small or great, is a barrier between you and the next world, a means of obscuring your vision when it should be clear. Stop your consciousness from giving its attention to that which when perceived will make you lacking and inadequate. Purify your consciousness, make clean your inward thoughts by exclusive concentration on the main purpose, by complete and exclusive devotion, being of single purpose, zealous to achieve your objective. When you are cured of what was hidden in your secret thoughts, your external appearance, which is known and seen, will be vindicated.

" Beware lest you deviate towards anything, though its significance be trifling it will lead you away from that which is clearly virtue; surely he has the worst of the bargain at all times who sells much of permanent value for little of what does not last, who is occupied with worldly matters at the cost of neglecting the next world.

" O, you that seek the ideal in state and path to God, your prime undertaking which brings you nigh to your God, is the practice of denying the world and turning away from all things towards which the appetites of your soul may lean, be they small or large. For even the small things to which you lean must take something from you in her perception, preoccupy your heart and distract your mind. And it is in proportion to the strength or weakness of that small desire for the world that the strength or weakness of your preoccupation will vary. It

is in accordance with the incidence of this distraction that the understanding of that which you seek will be obscured. For your actions will be effective and your hearts will be preserved in purity only when the distractions of the world are cut from both of them.

" If it should happen that something distracts, even though it be small, it becomes at once your labour and the object of your labour, and makes distant from you your awareness and comprehension. It will hold you back from achieving that perfect state. Be wary of what will incline you to worldly things and turn you in their direction even though its power may be trifling. In becoming completely free from all this you will exclusively achieve a fully balanced state, perfection of action and speech."

The scholar said to him: " I submit to your guidance unreservedly, and concentrate entirely upon it. I have no other occupation for my heart than it and recognize in it my right course of action. My hopes that through the righteousness of your guidance and through the rightness of your preaching and through the veracity of your counsel to me that God will bring me to all that for which I hope and the fulfilment of what I seek. I have seen the very springs of wisdom flowing from the deep, enclosed secret of yourself out upon your tongue and reaching me and imparting to me some measure of what you intended for me and I tasted of its water what I could assimilate and it brought me new life and proof of your desire to be of use to me. So give me more of that whereby life becomes stronger, and which brings me back from death, which was my past state, to that future so fraught with change. For, surely, the only thing left to me on account of which I can turn to God on your behalf is to entreat Him to vouchsafe to you a fine reward for what you have done for me, that this recompense to you should be in keeping of what is worthy of Him and His companionship to the faithful.

" O, wise man, since you have woken me from the slumber

of error, and roused me from the dreams and the dozing of forgetfulness, it has become possible for me to apprehend your purpose. That which I found has compelled me to do certain things, and I found that the discovery of my own inadequacies impelled me to overcome them and achieve a clear judgment and certain knowledge."

Now in what concerns what God has made easy of inspiration and what knowledge itself requires by way of further extension . . .

A litter of ABU'L QASIM AL-JUNAYD to ABU YA'QCB
YUSUF IBN AL-HUSAYN AR-RAZI Allah have mercy
on them both

May God reveal to you the true nature of His revelation,
and grant you the greatness of His favour and graciousness.
May He contain you by embracing you yourself in the fullness
of His beneficences which, when they reach you, are the grace
of His raising you and exalting you. Then will you be where
no other is a mediator between you and Him, but you will be
in a relationship with God based on that which God has given
you. That which God has given you is something chosen only
for the chosen among the elect. He gives you a place, after
selection, among those whom He has specially for His saints.
He chooses you by His choice of the great ones whom He loves.
These are they whom He has marked out by this preferment
for the height of His companionship.

Their first steps directly towards Him on the paths which
lead to Him are to remove all other than God on their way to
Him. By God's aid they reach Him first of all others that seek
Him, their footsteps are elevated up to Him alone when they
have left behind all great desires. Then do the lights of revelation
shine upon them generously, God's companionship flows over
them like the rising flood, with all the generosity of an exuberant
flow. Its downpour is overwhelming, like that of heavy, continuous
rain, like the rich milk of steady piety. It utterly over-
whelms and stupefies the human perception of those whom God

marks out by piety. God dazzles those whom He wishes by the brightness of His sudden appearance.

Now to what extent and by what means is this stage of piety entered ? I refer to this stage of piety which is achieved in the hearts of those who are thereby honoured by God. And how and in what degree can the intellect of him who approaches that stage of piety hold him back from it? Surely this cannot take place solely by the deed of the subject, even though he be the object of God's honour. Nor can he perceive this state of piety, the secret of the saint, even though the subject be firm and established. It is only God who can put this on, on behalf of His companions and friends, in the same way as it is He with His strength and power who imbues it into those who carry His throne. It is God who protects those whom He has chosen to be His personal companions.

In view of what has preceded, it is clear that, when God desires to create this state of piety in a man, He calls upon him to concentrate with all his being on God and He approaches nigh unto the individual whom He has selected. He takes unto Himself permanently the individual whom He has chosen as the recipient of the gift of His secret. Thus God's complete gift becomes the possession of those who are brought near unto Him and abide with Him. After these come those who are brought near to God, and after these come the saints of all types. Now all these have noble gifts which God has generously given them, which He has bestowed upon them by way of His gifts and His graciousness.

This is their favour and their fortune from God, their ever lasting and eternal gift. Now all this, though it is of overwhelming value and a mark of special favour which God reserves for his elect, though it is the most precious of His gifts to His pious, is none the less of the nature of a veil which obscures the divine vision from all except the selected few whom God has specifically indicated. It, therefore, follows from this state of affairs that we have been describing the conditions of the

beginning of the knowledge of God by the chosen few who have been specifically selected by God for this knowledge. Nor can this ever be achieved by any individual in whom anything earthly still survives, in whom the potentiality of an inclination to sin still exists.

O, my brother, may it be God's will that you and I join the companionship of God in this fuller sense, the company of those whom God has taken completely unto Himself!

And now to the body of my letter to you, O, my brother. As you may know, the paths of righteousness go smoothly, the ways or uprightness are clear and well prepared and smooth for the steps of those who travel by them, they are wide enough for the journey of those who seek to travel by them and brightly illuminated and pleasant for the hearts of those that desire them. And yet how few are they that seek them? How few are righteous enough to travel on them? The paths are without travellers and lonely as a sequestered rutting camel. They are like the desolate, deserted places without inhabitants to tend them though God has made these places potentially habitable and promised any residents or travellers the finest of garments. Of all God's creatures none desires this elevated station. I find that knowledge, in spite of the many who claim to possess it, and in spite of the universality of those who seek after it, is none the less bereft of human possessors. It is a rare quality beyond the capacity of the multitude, both solitary and distant. And this is because those that seek after it do not do so with all their might unreservedly,¹ do not show the necessary pertinacity in their search. I find that most people are ignorant though they claim to have knowledge. It is abundantly clear that many who, in their own eyes, perform that which is required of them, none the less lack that special knowledge. For, alas, most men's attention grips tight on the material world as they seek what their hands can hold. They prefer present profit and concentrate the whole of their perception in their devotion to worldly virtue. Surely their longing is limited by so little an

object in the spiritual universe. And so, reluctantly, I find that which they seek is unworthy, is even reprehensible, for surely these are not works for the after life, they are utterly perplexed and cannot appreciate what this world brings upon them. There is none to wake them from their stupor. And yet if you tell him of his plight he will deny it. Here, then, do we see the complete victory of evanescent earthly deception and complete perplexity and lack of comprehension of the things of the world to come.

And so, my brother, since humanity is so constituted, how great is their need for the gentle scholar, the sympathetic counsel of the teacher, the right guidance of the preacher! And you, my brother may God be pleased with you! are one of the few left of those who have passed on; you are one of the scholars universally recognized, one of the greatest of the wise. And you may God be pleased with you! know that God has made a covenant with those who know Him, who have knowledge of Him, those whom He has chosen in the Qur'an, those to whom He has granted comprehension of Him, those whom He has specially selected and endowed with the ability to interpret the Qur'an to the masses, to whom He has given the fullness of His faith. It is with these that He has made His covenant, that, in return for this knowledge of God, they should impart it to their fellow men and not withhold it. As we read in the Qur'an:

" The Rabbis and Jewish scholars in that to them was entrusted the care of God's book ", and " Why do their Rabbis and scholars not forbid them from uttering sinful words and eating that which is forbidden ? Their works are surely evil."

Now you, my brother, are one of those still left to whom the Book of God is entrusted, to whom its interpretation and decisions are known and, as I see it, it is incumbent on you to expound to your fellow men that which God has granted you and to make public the grace which God has vouchsafed to you.

So may God have mercy on you turn to your disciples and give them your full attention, face them and concentrate on them, give them of the knowledge which has been vouchsafed to you, grant them your kindness, and privilege them with your guidance, with that fine teaching which leads them to God. Be generous to them with that of your knowledge which will help them, and show them the confidence of your understanding. Be with them both by night and by day and give them that special cognisance of your experience.

This surely is the right which the people have over you, their prerogative. You will remember the verse in the Qur'an when God addresses His most noble creatures to whom He grants respect and status. " Be patient with those who call on their God morning and evening, seeking His face, and let thy gaze on them not cease, nor be disturbed by the pomp of this world. Do not obey the calls of those who forget us, who follow their own desires, whose case is lost; but say, the Truth is from your Lord." This is God's injunction to His Prophet Muhammad the chosen.

My brother, it was not my desire to draw your attention to a privilege and a duty which you neglect, not to any suspected deficiency surely God will guard you from any lapse or omission, from any deficiency or relaxation! but God says: " Teach for instruction is of avail to those that believe."

Now I began my letter to you with a view to establishing our closer contact, seeking your attention and your good graces and hoping that it would cause you to write back to me. So please do as I ask and grant me that further pleasure which would delight me. May God make you the instrument of aid to your brothers.

None the less, my brother may you be guided on the right path! there is just one minor point I should like to raise. It is one which I had first to learn myself and which I now venture to pass on to you in the hope that you too will add to it and in your turn teach it to me. And I should like to apologize

in advance in the event of your not accepting it. Accept it only if it appeals to you as being true and accept it only as a piece of advice, since I present it to you as a suggestion for what it is worth: nor will I take exception to you if you reject it. My brother, be cautious with your fellow men and be sure you understand your contemporaries. This is a primary consideration. Further, speak only after you are sure that you know your listeners.

KITAB AL-FANA'

A Discourse of the IMAM ABU'L QASIM AL-JUNAYD IBN MUHAMMAD may God sanctify his soul'

" Praise be to God who severs the earthly bonds of those of His worshippers who seek Him and only Him and who grants the favour of His truths to those who reach Him, who find their support in Him, when He gives them (real) existence and grants them the favour of His love. Those that know Him does He list as His saints enjoying the various degrees of His benefactions. To them does He show the strength which emanates from Him and He endows them with something of His (divine nature) so that the passing thoughts which they encounter do not take possession of them. Nor do those qualities exist in them which might cause them ultimately to be lacking in the ability to achieve true unity with Him, Tawhid, to be completely divorced from this world. All this, then, is in accordance with God's call to them, their potentiality for intimacy with Him, the appearance of the Unseen and the proximity of the Beloved."

I heard Junayd continue as follows: " Allah granted me the favour of this intimacy and then veiled Himself from me with the veil of my corporal limitations. And I am myself the source of my tribulation. Woe is me! Allah first beguiled me and then disappointed me (of His vision by my own physical weakness).

It was my presence with Him which was the cause of my absence (from this world). My joy in my vision of God was the goal of my intense effort. But now my strength is gone and my spirit is departed. I have no taste for life nor can I savour the joy of His vision. I can no longer find true pleasure nor true pain.

The world is become vapid. Yea, the very words I was wont to use have passed beyond my control. No phrases come to me, nor does any incentive invite me. That which was revealed to me has left me at the stage at which I was at the beginning."

Junayd was asked; " How is it possible for you to speak in this way since no phrase comes to you and no incentive invites you?" Junayd replied: " I spoke when I was absent from my normal state and then an overpowering vision and a refulgent brilliance took possession of me and induced in me a state of Fana' creating me anew in the same way as He created me at first when I had no existence. Nor had I any sway over Him since no one can influence Him. Nor had I any knowledge of Him because He alone has this knowledge. Did He not obliterate my identity by His own nature and in this process my perception passed from me because I was close to Him. He is the Creator and the Re-Creator."

I asked Junayd: " What do you mean by the phrase ' He induced in me a state of Fana' by creating me anew, in the same way as He created me at first when I had no existence ' ? " He replied: " Do you not know that God said ' When God took of the sons of Adam ' " and he quoted the verse as far as " We witness." " In this verse God tells you that He spoke to them at a time when they did not exist, except in so far as they existed for Him. This existence is not the same type of existence as is usually attributed to God's creatures, it is a type of existence which only God knows and only He is aware of. God knows their existence, embracing them, sees them in the beginning when they are non-existent and oblivious of their future existence in this world. The existence of these is timeless. This, then, is a divine existence and a God-like conception which becomes

only Him.

" It is for this reason that we said, that when God granted existence to His worshipper. He caused, as it were. His desire to flow over him according to His will. This was possible because of God's divine and unique quality. This type of existence, then, is without doubt the most perfect and penetrating. It is the most significant, dominant and more fully described as conquering, victorious and genuinely overwhelming than the normal existence which appears in the worshipper, because in the divine existence his individuality is entirely obliterated and his worldly existence departs from him. This is because no human quality survives nor does normal human existence continue, as we have made clear in describing the divine qualities of God's Truth and God's Victory.

" Now hand in hand with this spiritual metamorphosis goes a metamorphosis in values. Thus the pleasing is not of the accepted order of the pleasing, God's generosity is no longer of the usually accepted order of His generosity, because God neither feels nor is felt. He does not introduce variations into His nature. No one knows the nature of His kindness to His creatures, since it is a divine kindness which only God can know and do. In view of the foregoing we said that God has obliterated what appears to the worshipper and when He has overwhelmed him, God shows Himself as the most overpowering, the perfect conqueror, the completely victorious."

So I asked; " What can those, who have the quality described, find, in view of the fact that you postulate the removal of the essential nature of their existence and their knowledge ? "

He replied: " Their full spiritual existence is of God and from God and is revealed to them from God through His word and His complete sovereignty. This full spiritual existence is not achieved through their own unaided efforts, nor is it what they might imagine after complete subservience to God when their perception is removed and their soul annihilated, since God is separate from them and not bound to them. How can they

find or describe what they have not experienced or lived through, or what they sought for and had no knowledge of? This is proved by the tradition which we have. It is related that the Prophet said: ‘ My servant draws nigh unto me by works of supererogation and I love him; and when I love him, I am his ear, so that he hears by me, and his eye, so that he sees by me.

" The Tradition continues in this wise but I have adduced an extract long enough to prove my point. That God is his ear so that he hears by Him and his eye by which he sees, is the formulation of a conception which is hard to comprehend. How can you bring it into the scope of your knowledge ? If any one were to make such a claim it would be manifestly wrong, since this is knowledge of such a nature that cannot be perceived by means which are known to us and understood by us. The meaning of this tradition can only be that it is God who strengthens him, who enables him to achieve this, who guides him and who gives the vision of what He wishes in the manner He wishes so that he achieves tightness and is in accord with truth. This, then, is the act of God in him, the gift of God to him and only to him. It is not to be attributed positively to the worshipper, since it does not originate from him, nor out of him, nor through him. Nay: it comes over him from elsewhere and must therefore be attributed to another source. This, then, is a possible interpretation of this secret and independent state of the nature described above."

I asked: " How can this presence before God be the cause of his absence, and the enjoyment of the vision of God be the ultimate object of his efforts; seeing that it is well known that men do enjoy and find presence before God without strenuous effort, and are not absent ? " He replied: "What you say is common knowledge and in the nature of human experience as it is usually described. But those endowed with special spiritual qualities, those who are the elect, those who have been singled out for their extraordinary spiritual capacity, they are

those whose presence before God is absence, and whose enjoyment of the vision of God is the result of their strenuous spiritual efforts. This takes place because of the removal from them as they are, both of their physical and of their spiritual perceptions. This is since God has taken complete possession of them. He has obliterated their personality and annihilated their individual qualities. As a result it is God who functions in them in all their concerns, it is God who establishes the motives for their actions. This is but an aspect of his perfection and completeness.

" In this state they find God's grace though they are absent and enjoy an existence which differs from familiar existence when the ultimate truth of God is refulgent and His victory complete. When the spirit is without that indescribable bliss which is not felt by the soul, nor comparable with any other sensation, the spirit becomes used to this complete Fund', and finds that its Fana' prevents it achieving Baqa'. But when God brings the spirit back to its normal state, he re-establishes it and gives it back to its own nature. Thus the experience with God and from God is hidden, the soul grieves, and becomes used to its normal state, because it has lost its first perfection and highest favour. It has been brought back to the shackles of reason and perception. Its regret is profound and its anguish for what it has lost continues in its conscious existence and present reality. This, then, is the reason for the soul's longing, its needs have returned to it: how can it not suffer by being banished from God ? The soul was satisfied and now thirsts anew.

" Thus it is that the souls of those who have known God seek after the green pastures, the beautiful vistas, the fresh green gardens but all other things which they long for echoing their experience before God are a source of pain for them because they serve only to remind them that they are unattainable and recall the lost Beloved. Sad indeed is their lot!

" The reference (in the Hadith) to God's gift of the faculties to His worshipper is explicit and not to be taken in a figurative sense. The exact nature of these faculties is known only to God.

Those whom He endows with these faculties, those who are cognizant of them and have been chosen to enjoy them ... for those so elect it is not seemly that human concepts should occur to them or human motives activate them. These faculties constitute a quality which persists after true Fana', when his human nature vanishes because he is the presence of God, overcome by God's victory, conquered by Him and completely possessed of Him, and that his individual characteristics are eliminated before the divine presence. Even so, in this divine state, he cannot find a way to reach the ultimate reality which now possesses him. It is only in this state that God can be seen in His exalted nature. His beatific names be appreciated. It is only after this stage has been achieved that it is possible for the worshipper to experience the "testing time he struggles and prevails and is faithful to God and then he is conquered by that which obliterates him, that same strength, that elevated spiritual stage, that noble relationship with God."

I said: "What you have told me is indeed remarkable. How is it then that those who enjoy this elevated relationship can also experience Please expound this for me." He said: "Know that at this stage when they seek God it is in accordance with His will, and when they do not seek God, it is also in accordance with His will. At this stage, then, when God has complete possession of them. Bald' overtakes them because of their human qualities which still persist, because of their enjoyment of physical pleasures. This, then, is the veil between them and God which God has placed between them so that they can still retain a measure of their individuality and use both their physical and spiritual faculties in this environment of glory, in this consequence of praise (dhikr), in victory of God's conquest. How can this be known to you if none but the elect know it, and only they can discover it, and only they are capable of this knowledge? Can you understand how it is that they should seek God and yet not reach Him though they are helped by God's revelation to them, and are aided by the help of God's

truths? It is because God has made them cognizant of an aspect of His existence and given them complete conviction of His hidden secrets which are the path to Him when the human qualities are obliterated and human needs are nullified. As a result, contact with God develops and the spiritual stages become elevated as the human perception is lost and the individuality passes away. He now presents them with effacement after they have lost their earthly individuality and reveals to them reality after they have found reality with God. " This existence before God and vision of Him still emanates in some degree from themselves and is of the nature of a light veil or a thin curtain. When they come before it, they are overcome by grief for what they have lost and become aware of the intense effort they have made. This is because they have been overcome by that which is without cause and that which is not subject to external influence. Now at this stage the intimacy which they seek with God is in accordance with His will, and that from which they withhold themselves in their relationship with Him, is dictated by what He withholds. Their new knowledge of Him is that which God has inspired in them and not that which they know of Him as individuals. Then is their abode in strength and they attain true intimacy with God; they in themselves become fully preoccupied and there grow up in them, from God, the qualities of existence and non-existence. At this stage the anguish of the spiritual trial waxes."

I asked: " Then describe to me how envelopes them when they have fully achieved this wonderful state, when they are constantly near to God." He replied: " They have sufficient with what has already appeared to them and no longer have desires of the spirit. They have given over striving and donned the garb of God's victory which has come from His positive power and His awe-inspiring glory. At this stage they can view the world with their own perception and do not have recourse to the perception which comes from God since they are wholly separate and divided from Him, and use their own eyes God

being firmly established in His power and glory. When the manifestations of God appear to them, God drives them through their own qualities in His path of victory and glory. It is a stage which they leave without any claim to God, preferring their unique spiritual happiness, confident in their new-found intimacy, sure of access to God, they are free of formal obligations and will not be called to give account of their actions. It is at this stage of confident intimacy that God's test is visited upon them suddenly and without warning."

I said: " You talk far above my head and have left me in a whirl. Please be simpler and speak so that I can understand."

He said as follows: " When those who experience Bald' achieve that contact with God which He vouchsafes to them and when His behest comes to them, their inner spirit is metamorphosed and their spirit has lost its way, as it were, in eternity. The familiar places were not there for a refuge and the former homes of the body can no longer surround the new abode of the spirit. They are consumed with longing for Him who has brought them Bald\ and moan constantly in the second loss of their individuality. This loss has been a grievous wound to them, their new state has depressed them. They are very sorrowful, suffering deeply as they seek after God. They are overcome by a thirst which is all-consuming and constantly increasing. The pursuit of knowledge of God is now the constant preoccupation of the soul, it is entirely devoted to submerging its individuality in the attainment of intimacy with God. This thirst from God for God is an anguish even more intense than the mourning for a near relative. God makes of every external form a sign. He gives to the soul the taste of poverty and renews for the soul knowledge of the experience of spiritual effort.

" The soul accepts the spiritual burden with its implication of suffering, seeks for its cure and is preoccupied with that divine revelation vouchsafed to it. As a result, it is able to view the remote with the eye of propinquity, to be closer to God

because a veil has been removed and it is no longer completely concealed. Though the soul has Bald' it is not rejected. How can it be hidden from God by a veil when it is, as it were, a captive before Him, imprisoned in front of Him. God has allowed the suppression of the individuality when the man has Bald'. The soul no longer arrogates a degree of importance to its individuality but is amply satisfied with God's love and propinquity. Such, then, is the infinite duration of this newly found spiritual life and the intensity of the stage of Bald that the suppression of the individuality is completely swamped by the lightning flash of God's regard.

" As a result, the soul derives spiritual pleasure from Bald and is delighted with its Bald' with God, because it can enjoy propinquity with God and the sting of Bald' is assuaged. The soul is not bent down under the burden of Bald', nor does it chafe at its spiritual load. Their experience makes heroes of them, because of the secrets revealed to them they stay conquered by God awaiting His commands ' That Allah designate what shall be done.' Those who have experienced Bald' fall into two classes, on the one hand those who ate at home with their Bald' and live constantly with God's desire ... at the same time his interest in worldly affairs continues. None the less, he prefers to continue to have physical enjoyment as well as spiritual pleasure. God therefore makes a test for him in the continued choice between the two pleasures. It is a glorious trial. (As for the second class of those that experience Bald' and are not spiritually elevated, it is said that the reason for their departure from the state of grace is their lack of spiritual competence and the weakness of their spirit.)"

KITAB AL-MITHAQ

IN THE NAME OF GOD THE COMPASSIONATE, THE MERCIFUL

What follows are Junayd's remarks on the Qur'anic verse (Sura VII, verse 172); " " 'hen thy Lord took the descendants

of Adam." In. the opinion of the scribe, it is suitable to call these remarks Kitab al-Mithaq, i.e. The Book of Covenant. The reason for this choice of title is that Sahl also has a work on the same subject and that it carries the title proposed here, viz. al-Mithaq.

Praise be to God who has made His graciousness to His worshippers, which is the revelation of His grace, a clear guide to knowledge of Him. This spiritual grace is in the measure of man's capacity to understand and to perceive. It is the capacity which enables him to communicate with God before his corporal existence. I praise Him throughout all eternity and I offer Him my gratitude everlastingly.

I testify that there is no God but God, the Unique, the One who is alone, the Eternal, the Holy. And I testify that Muhammad, may God's grace and peace be upon him, is the one who has been made perfect by prophet hood, and the one who has completed (God's) mission. . . .

Now God has the elect among His worshippers and the chosen of those whom He has created. These are those whom He has chosen to be His saints and to be the recipients of His graciousness. He has thereby separated them from the mass of mankind unto Himself. But he has made their bodies to be of this world, their spirits of the nature of light, their apperception of the nature of spirit. He made their intellects bounded by the throne of God, but their understanding bounded by the veil. He has made the above of their spirits to be of the nature of the unseen in the very dwelling place of the unseen, and he has granted them freedom of access to the hidden corners of His Kingdom. He is their only refuge and with Him alone do they abide. In (their) timeless existence before Him and in (their) state of unity with Him, it is He who had granted them their being. When He called them and they answered quickly, their answer was a gracious and generous gift from Him, it was His answer on their behalf when he granted them their being, their function being that of interlocutors. He gave them knowledge

of Him when they were only concepts which He had conceived. He then wished it, and made them like seeds which He transformed at His will into human seeds and put them in the reins of Adam. As we read; " And when He brought forth their descendants from the reins of the Sons of Adam and took them to witness against themselves, ' Am I not,' said He, ' your Lord ? ' " In this verse Allah has stated that He spoke to them when they had no formal existence. This is possible because Allah perceives them in their spiritual existence. This spiritual existence connotes their knowledge of God spiritually without in any way postulating their being aware of their own individuality. It follows, then, that at this stage God has existence of a sort which is known only to Him and recognized only by Him.

Now God, in recognizing their existence, comprehending them and seeing them, created them for the first time in a state of spiritual abstraction. Those who existed in the timeless existence are those who exist in the world which we know who are capable of abstraction from it and can abide with God. When they are completely imbued with the divine qualities, freed from the shackles of time, and have something of the nature of eternity, all these qualities dominate them when God desires their abstraction from this world so that they can abide with Him in the next, and He can instruct them to know His unseen, and so that he can show them the hidden corners of His knowledge and can grant them union with Him.

After their union with Him, He separates them from Himself (and grants them their individuality again), then He makes them absent (from this world when they are in union with Him), and makes them present (in this world) when He has separated them from Himself-(and granted them their individuality again). Thus it is that their absence from this world is but a facet of their presence with God and their presence in this world is a necessary cause of their absence from God. (As sentient individuals) they are dazzled by the sight of the emanations

from Him, but with the passing of the faculty of rational perception, their individuality passes too, and so He removes them from this world. He grants perfection to their Fana' by granting them the state of Baqa' and perfects this Baqa' after Fana' by Fana'.

The circumstances of this world surround them in so far as God has willed it, since He wills it in His unique and elevated capacity. Whereas their first existence is completely real, is better, higher and more conducive to God's conquest and victory, and to their complete absorption in Him by means of that which He has granted them. In this state God wipes out all indications of their existence in this world and removes the signs of their corporal existence and their human existence vanishes. Moreover, they have no physical attributes, no perceptible existence, nor can the indications of their existence in this world be comprehended fully. All these indications conceal the timelessness of spiritual existence. The bliss of this spiritual existence is not comparable with human bliss. Though the same word is used, the meaning is different. In both cases the general nature of the bliss is the same, but the signs and indications are different. Whereas the external signs are pleasurable the taste is, in fact, marred by bitterness. Their thoughts are constantly directed towards their Beloved and their inward thoughts never cease from praising the Lord. At this moment the turbulent seas of the zealous God rage against them and severe indeed is their trial when they are on the verge of it, and their souls weaken while they wait patiently for it. Then that which was familiar to them becomes strange and that which they knew not becomes crystal clear. They are distinguished by their knowledge of truth before God when God creates in them the faculty of true knowledge of Himself. This faculty emanates from God and must be attributed to Him and not to the person in whom it is endowed. The possession of this faculty marks the fullness of endeavours before God.

At this stage God does not give precise definition to their

trials, else they might rest back, nor does He indicate the exact nature of their endeavour lest they rest on their laurels. He makes His elect preoccupied independently of one another and separates them from one another. Thus, at the same time, they are both present and not in existence. The fullness of their endeavour is in their enjoyment of the vision of God, because, after He has obliterated in them every trace of corporal and Spiritual existence, they can find Him themselves, and have vision of Him in their new state. In this state he has full possession of them and has destroyed their individuality (and has removed their characteristics) as we perceive it. In a word, perception of the truth comes from the Truth par 'Excellence that is God, if and when God so wills it, and in the measure of His recognition of their worthiness and in His enabling them to achieve. God, as it were, replaces the faculty of perception which they had prior to His taking full possession of them. He creates in them both the associated qualities and the faculty of perception which are in accord with His own type of perfection and completeness. As a result, the joy which they experience is not of the same order as normal human joy and has in it something of a trial. This is because Existence after complete personal suppression is not the same as normal human existence, the ultimate Truth of God is now refulgent and His victory is complete.

When the spirit is without that indescribable bliss which is not felt by the soul nor comparable with any other sensation, the spirit becomes used to this complete Fana', and the individuals are, as it were, cast into the desolation of destruction of the spirit's trials. Then they become familiar with this state after Fana' and no longer are satisfied with their normal taste and cannot accept their previous type of existence. God absorbs them unto Himself without heeding their attributes or any characteristic whatsoever which may be attributed to them. He does not heed either those inclinations with which He has endowed them which create the describable qualities in them.

Now these special qualities which enable man to come nigh unto God are lost in all his other qualities when man cannot find the path to achieve the approach to the highest existence in Truth (Haqq) which God has enabled him to have. Thus, then, are His high attributes, the strength of His manifestation and the glory of His dominion.

Now it comes to pass that those who, having approached God and having stayed with God and having been certain of their contact with God, and not having deceived themselves about their own experience are put to God's test by the subsequent complete obliteration of their experience.

At this stage God endows them with strength, high degree, honoured intimacy and the glory of close relationship with Him. God's test is that He now presents them with effacement after they have already lost their earthly individuality, with reality after they have found Reality in God.

The severity of this test lies in the fact that, when brought face to face with ultimate effacement and true reality, then and only then, can they realise the degree of their inability to comprehend and the excessive brilliance of the vision which is beyond the confines of knowledge and which defies description. Now at this stage the intimacy with they seek with God is in accordance with His will and that from which they withhold themselves in their relationship with Him is dictated by what He withholds

And their new knowledge of Him is that which God inspired in them and not that which they know of Him as individuals. Then is their abode in strength and they attain true intimacy with God; they are elected to the presence of God who had Himself witnessed their transmutation. "What they have perceived is through God who unites each one's perception of Him and retains His separate entity. God is above human description and exalted far beyond a similarity with His creations.

ON DIVINITY

Said Abu'l Qasim al Junayd may God have mercy on him!
God was in isolation with the elect and divinity was maintained in absoluteness for them alone. The first appearance of God's visitation was when He delivered to them the evidences of His causing them to appear and made them to dwell with divinity from its inception. God created timelessness, eternally continuous, lasting always, that which has neither end nor termination. Then God added to this the testimony of the power of His glory, the extent of His splendour, the display of His conquest, the height of His elevation, the dominion of His sovereignty, the intensity of His awe, the nobility of His majesty, the splendour of His rule. He is unique by these qualities and thus allows himself to be distinguished. He is magnified and exalted by His greatness.

Thus, then, God in truth and by the measure of truth, is the ultimate truth, and God in truth and by the measure of all decisions, is the final arbiter. His unity in the uniqueness of His power is one, unique and eternal.

This, then, is the prime evidence that God has so inspired the elect that they can appreciate fully the significance of Uluhiya, that He has brought them near unto Him. In this state, God enables them further to know those of His fine attributes which He had withheld from them, which He had concealed within His protection. These attributes, some of which have been referred to and others of which have not been mentioned, describe union with God and separation from Him, according to God's will that they be revealed or withheld. Some of these true names of God are self explanatory, their meaning is implicit in their use, they are exalted in their ways, elevated in their dwelling places, and travel freely. These attributes are extinguished when God permits them to be absorbed into that which Truth had protected and concealed, had hidden and kept away, had covered up and screened from sight; Qualities which Truth has overcome and made its own, has conquered and made subject.

Then the manifestations of reality vanish in their division without being cut. When it is united (in God) it is extraordinarily elevated, magnified in its appearance and ennobled by the inviolability of its laws; awe inspiring with divine awe, glorious in God's glory, and victorious in God's victory. And if you ask how does the conception of "where?" apply to this, the answer is that, in so far as the word "where?" can apply to Him, the answer is not confined to the limits of our conception of space. This is because "where?" as applied to God is in proportion to His timeless continuance. Thus, then, the "where?" as applied to or for God is not the "where?" which we know, since it is only applicable to divinity. It is an aspect displayed by God when all the manifestations of reality are united.

God, then, it is that causes His elect to perceive the awaited evidence of His truth, these to whom this description applies. It is in His separate existence and peculiar knowledge.

The foregoing is but an indication of what cannot be further explained. Moreover, this of its very nature cannot be understood from indications, but only when you yourself are in the state which is described. I have wrapped up what is in it and have not elaborated it. Accept it, then, from the only source of it. If God wills He will guide you to its comprehension.

One of the features which God as creative Truth has implanted in the conception of the separate (human entity) is that He causes to be intimately associated with the individual the manifestation of that wherewith He clothes His elect. He has clothed them with the manifestation of that wherewith He has them in His thrall. Thus the elect to whom God makes this revelation, are themselves the testimonies to the mysteries which He has concealed. Whenever He causes the elect to see something of the divine revelation He buries, as it were, the man who has achieved this spiritual state in the state of concealed mystery. The elect, when they see what God causes them to see, are in a state of continued exaltation inspired by God's revelation.

At this stage, God's revelation is that of a secret cautiously and tremulously shown, in the unveiling of the hidden, before God enables the elect to see past the curtain which conceals this unusual divine aspect. Then God shows the evidence of His generosity. His predestined affection. He demonstrates this to them in the fact of His receiving them, in showing the glory of their dwelling place, in proclaiming the state of the achievement of fulfilment and the attainment of everything which was beloved, sought after and longed for. This, then, is the perfect gift of sincere companionship, the essence of the gift of God's proximity.

Then, when they are confirmed and confident in the stage where God has placed them, God grants them another grace in that He shows them how to lose the temporal shackles of their individuality, how to apprehend what He offers them, how to renounce the gifts generously given, and the affection bestowed on them as individuals. He grants to His elect the contrary of the former (Vision of God) since He desires to bring them to this new state of grace thereby and demands it of them.

If you were to see the elect at the instant of their vision of God and the state in which God has placed them, you would see nothing but the hostages of captive bodies, the physical relics of souls which are about in heaven. God has exhausted them by obliteration in the Kingdom of His glory and completely tired them out by His excessive trial in His absence from them ... an absence which causes them to cry out in anguish, an overwhelming grief which makes them cry aloud. God stops their very breathing, imprisons their breath within them so that their life's breath circulates only in God, and they are, as it were, made one with Him. This is but part of the science of Tawhid which God indicates to His chosen.

KITAB FI'L-FARQ BAIN AL-IKHLAS WAS-SIDQ

In the Name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, Praise be to God, and peace be on His servants whom He hath chosen.

Abu'l Qasim al-Junayd may God sanctify his soul and give light to his grave says as follows:

May God grant thee the happiness of His nearness;
And may He at all times give thee new increase of His goodness;

And may He protect thee in the shade of His merciful wing;
And may He make your refuge near to Him, even where He has made to abide the souls of His privileged ones those to whom He has given His protection, whom naught can overtake and naught can hinder and whose devotion to God naught can disturb;

The prayers and peace of God be upon His Apostle, his family and his companions.

You have asked me what is the difference between Ikhlas (unquestioning submission to God, hence righteousness) and Sidq (a correct relationship with God, hence righteousness). Sidq is to keep strict watch and ward on one's soul, after having performed one's religious duties and acted according to religious precepts. Further, it implies the public performance of all legal duties, and that this performance in the beginning be based in good will and devotion to God may He be exalted and magnified.

Sidq is therefore an attribute of the Will and is present at the inception of the Will, at the performance of religious injunctions acting as the impulse to the Will inasmuch as God makes the way unto Himself. It is on this path that Sidq prevents you from acquiescing in the desire of your lower soul to relax in your religious duty. It impels you to accept religious precepts plainly without having recourse to complex interpretation.

Sidq therefore existed before the existence of Ikhlas . In the Koran we have the phrase: " He will ask the Sadiqin" (possessors of Sidq), that is once they have acquired Sidq, " what it meant to them." God has spoken of the Sadiqin using the word in a different sense, when He says " This is the day on which Sidq will help the Sadiqin."

Sidq, in the first passage, implies that God recognizes in the Sadiq a distinction between their Sidq and their Ikhlas , because Ikhlas exists as an attribute of man in two separate states in the state of Conviction and Intention and, secondly, in the state of Action.

Ikhlas, as an attribute of the Sadiq, is present in his Conviction; it has nothing to do with the nature of Sidq, since Ikhlas is almost intuitive. A man who understands the meaning and purpose of all his actions and does not do those actions which do not conform with Ikhlas such a man is called Mukhlis. Ikhlas is primarily the recognition of the Unity of God with the Will, and, secondly, the recognition and avoidance of those actions which are evil.

(The term Sidq is used both of man and of God, but in different senses.) When it is used of man, the reference is to the order of his piety (Sidq) and not to his Ikhlas . When it is used of God it connotes Ikhlas . Thus one can say " so and so has Sidq " with reference to his knowledge of religious precepts and his assiduity to in their performance. But one cannot say " so and so has Ikhlas ." Ikhlas is a purely personal and intimate quality which cannot be directly perceived by one's fellow men. Sidq is, then, a patent attribute of its possessor, whereas Ikhlas is not visible.

The Sadiq is so called because of the attributes he so patently possesses. We may call a man a Sadiq having observed his outward actions. He must also have some degree of Ikhlas inwardly. However, in order to show the qualities of Sadiq, the Sadiq has to understand the meaning of things, so that he can accept and do those actions which conform with his religious persuasions and reject those actions which do not conform. Ikhlas is superior to Sidq, in that implicit in Ikhlas is the knowledge of the significance and ultimate purpose of all things, and, moreover, he who possesses Ikhlas has the power to resist the evil suggestions of Satan because his heart is pure.

Nothing excels Ikhlas , because for the worshipper there is no goal in devotion beyond Ikhlas .

We do not say that there are degrees of Ikhlas , because Ikhlas is in itself an ultimate goal, whereas that there are degrees of Sidq is implicit in the verse in the Qur'an when God is referred to as asking the Sadiqin about their Sidq. He does not ask the Mukhlisin about their Ikhlas , since that is the essential quality which God demands of the true worshipper.

So Ikhlas excels Sidq, and Sidq is inferior to Ikhlas .

Now Sidq is used in three senses: the Sadiq in his words, the Sadiq in his action, the Sadiq in his intention. The Sadiq in words is one who tells the truth, whether it be in his favour or against him, who avoids specious interpretation and deceit. The Sadiq in action is one who never spares himself and does not consider his own personal comfort. The Sadiq in intention is one whose actions are dictated by the fact that his heart is turned towards God. A man, then, who possesses all these qualities is a true Sadiq.

However, it must be realized that Sidq is ever present with the Sadiq and never in any circumstances absent. (See my analysis on this point at the beginning of this book.) Thus, we have Sidq in pious action, in self-denial, in asceticism, in trust in God, in spiritual happiness, in love of God, in desire for God, in declaring the Unity of God in the Moslem sense, in the qualities of the (murid) sufi novice and the sufi initiate both at the beginning of his meditations and after them. All these stages of spiritual experience inevitably bear testimony to Sidq. Now the meaning of Ikhlas is complete and exclusive concentration on God. This focusing of intention towards God demands that the Mukhlis shall be aware of the implication of things and recognize that they change constantly. He will thus accept what conforms with the full focusing of his intention towards God and reject those indulgences prompted by either his worse self or the Devil, which do not conform. In this state his personal vision departs and he realizes it is a gift of

God which has replaced it. The Mukhlis will remain in a state of equanimity when his fellow men deride him because he recognizes God's gift of Ikhlas to him, and he will be displeased when his fellow men praise him, since he fears that he may lose God's gift of Ikhlas, and he no longer considers his fellow men when the spiritual state comes upon him. This is a sign which is visible to the vision of the Mukhlis, but does not exist in the vision of other beings.

Now the qualities of Sidq and Ikhlas are both present in one who is a Mukhlis, whereas the man who is described as a Sadiq and therefore has the quality of Sidq, is only at the threshold of Ikhlas. The ultimate quality to which we refer when we speak of 'Ubudiya (true worship of God) in those seeking the path to God is Ikhlas.

As for the genuine Sadiq, God may well grant him Ikhlas, which is the next stage; in the same way the genuine Mukhlis may in his next stage be granted the ability (Kifaya) which was lacking prior to this to concentrate his spiritual perception on God (Basira). The man who has attained this spiritual perception completely may well be granted in the next stage protection from his own evil instincts (Hiyata).

At this last stage God has full possession of His worshipper, He has overcome his faculty of reason and has annihilated his struggling individuality.

When God has full possession of the worshipper, He has endowed him with a new spiritual nature which replaces the individuality with which he formerly worshipped God. It is with this new and special faculty that it is now possible for him to worship God as One.

It is at this stage that the worshipper first realizes to the full the significance of the special Tawhid and that his acceptance of the reality of the physical world is replaced by his perception of reality itself. In the same way, the significance of the events in his life is that they are now in accordance with the will of his possessor, the external characteristics of these events being

entirely without significance.

When the worshipper reaches this stage, he can no longer be described in rational terms; in fact, the promptings of reason to the worshipper who has realized to the full the special Tawhid are nothing but evil whispers which he must overcome.

It is Reason which formerly directed the worshipper in his worship when he worshipped God as an individual, but when he is completely possessed by God his individuality is suppressed. He is, at it were, transmuted. His external characteristics remain the same, but his individuality has vanished. Thus he is at once present and absent.

ANOTHER CHAPTER WHICH DEALS WITH TAWHID

Know that the first condition of the worship of God may He be exalted and magnified is knowledge of God and that the basis of knowledge of God is the recognition of His being One (Tawhid), and that His unity demands the absolute negation of the possibility of describing God in answer to the questions "How?", "Where?" and "When?". It is through God

that we can be guided aright to Him, and the means of this correct guidance is God's permission that we may succeed in finding Him (Tawfiq) . When this permission is granted, the recognition of His unity follows. His Tawhid connotes belief in Him. From belief in Him follows confirmation which in turn leads to knowledge of Him. Knowledge of Him implies obedience to His commands, obedience carries with it the ascent towards Him which leads ultimately to reaching Him.

When God is attained His manifestation can be expounded, from His manifestation there follows bewilderment which is so overwhelming that it removes the possibility of the exposition of God. As a result of losing this manifestation of God the elect worshipper is unable to describe God. And, when the worshipper is unable to describe God, he finds the true nature of his existing for God. From the true nature of such existence (for God's sake only) there comes the vision of God, together

with the losing of his individual entity. Thus, with loss of his individual entity, his spiritual entity achieves absolute purity. In this state of absolute purity he has lost his personal attributes; by this loss he is wholly present (in God). By being wholly present in God, he is wholly lost to self. And thus he is present before God, absent in himself; absent and present at the same time. He is where he is not, and he is not where he is. Then, after he has not been, he is where he has been (before creation). He is himself, after he has not been truly himself. He is existent in himself and existent in God after having been existent in God and non-existent in himself. This is because he has left the drunkenness of God's overwhelming and come to the clarity of sobriety, and contemplation is once more restored to him, so that he can put everything in its right place and assess it correctly. Once more he assumes his individual attributes, after fana' his personal qualities persist in him and his actions in this world, when he has reached the zenith of spiritual achievement vouchsafed by God, he becomes a pattern for his fellow men.

ANOTHER QUESTION

If we consider a man whose knowledge is authoritative and genuine this religious knowledge demands punctilious performance and the man is completely devoted to it. He will find that the exigencies of that knowledge will not coincide with his instinctive spiritual desires. This gap, though he is aware, conscious and active, will lead him to have recourse to the science of the search after the return of God (Haqq) while he is still aware, conscious and active. He then returns to God, humble, modest, poor and with little, and asks Him to carry his burden of genuine knowledge. At this stage he becomes able to carry out the exigencies of the second type of knowledge by the dominance of his instinctive spiritual desires over his actions and is no longer positively aware of his genuine knowledge of the first type, which bound him to the conditions laid down in its edicts. When the two types of knowledge (namely, the theoretical knowledge and the intuitive) are merged by the

discovery of the reality of intuitive knowledge and the discarding of the reality of the first type, the elect has achieved true knowledge of the spiritual trial (Bald'). He tastes the bitter cup of God's censorship which makes it abundantly clear to him that he still has other characteristics and that, within himself, his nature still has hidden qualities; all this while he is going towards absolute and genuine Tawhid. Bald' diminishes in its rigour, in proportion as the intuition dominates and coincides with his natural desires (which are now elevated), as we have already described. At this stage, he comes to the obliteration of his individual instinctive desire for pleasure and also to the vanishing of his critical distinction with regard to the purification of his instincts through the disappearance of his desire for pleasure. Then he is able fully to comprehend the true indications towards God from the nature of events, the changes in things, without heed for mediums of understanding, since now his faculty of distinction coincides with a purified intuition.

ANOTHER QUESTION

Fear distresses me, Hope comforts me. Reality unites me with God, and Ritual separates me from God.

When God distresses me with fear, he obliterates my existence and takes care of me. When he comforts me with hope, he returns my existence to me after my absence and commands me to take care of myself. When He unites me with Him through the real (vision of God) He causes me to be present before Him and invites me. When God separates me from Him by ritual, He« shows me that which is not my true self and covers me up (so that I cannot see Him). In all these states it is God who moves me without keeping me still, who makes me unfamiliar with my own spirit and ill at ease in these states.

When I am before God I taste the savour of my existence would that God would obliterate my existence and cause me to enjoy His vision, or that He would make me absent from myself and give me respite from that which is due to Him as formal

ritual. Would that God would show me complete Fana' in which is my eternal life.

My fana' is my Baqa' In my genuine Fana' God obliterates in me both my Fana' and my Baqa', so that when I am totally obliterated, I am without either Baqa' or Fana' in my state of Fana' and Baqa'. This is because the state of Baqa' and Fana' apply to the existence of some being other than me, when I am obliterated.

ANOTHER QUESTION

Know that men are recognized by experience of their righteousness, their unsparing efforts to uphold the precepts laid down by God, persisting in their devotions from stage to stage until they reach the true and highest stage of worship of God. This is externally visible since they no longer have a choice in action, but are content to do God's will.

These, then, are the facts accepted by the community as indicating those combined characteristics which appear externally when the elect have reached that stage. This true and highest stage leads him to the vision of God, comprehension of God's guidance to Him, in modifying events for him to choose what God has chosen for him. These facts indicate that his fellow men have left him because his character has been modified for them and he is no longer aware of them. This is the stage of companionship. In the Qu'ran we have the verse in which God says to Moses; " I have taken you unto myself as a companion." In this stage of companionship, the range of his movements is limited, he can only go from God to God, for God and in God. He has Fana' and this too is obliterated because he persists in Baqa' only through complete obliteration.

God desires to return his worshipper to the community and does so, making clear the evidence of His grace to him, so that the lights of His gifts in the return of his individual characteristics scintillate and attract the community to him who appreciate him.

ANOTHER QUESTION

Know that you are your own veil which conceals yourself from you. Know also that you cannot reach God through yourself, but that you reach Him through Him. The reason is that when God vouchsafes the vision of reaching Him, he calls upon you to seek after Him and you do so. When you have the vision of seeking after God, you will apprehend its nature and the effort required to achieve what you desire. At this stage you are veiled until your great need for God returns in the search for Him and He becomes your pillar and support in your intense search after Him and enables you to perform those duties which He has chosen for you in the knowledge of the search after God, to maintain those conditions which He has laid down, and to observe those things which you have been asked to observe.

Thus it is that for your sake God protects you from yourself and causes you to pass by obliteration to eternal life, so that you achieve your desire and live eternally with Him. This is because the unification of him who recognizes fully the unity of God lasts for ever, though the man himself is obliterated. At this stage you are your true self because you have lost the shackles of your human individuality and you achieve eternal life with God because you are obliterated.

There are three stages in Fana' (obliteration).

First: The obliteration of attributes, characteristics and natural qualities in your motives, when you carry out your religious duties, making great efforts and doing the opposite of what you may desire and compelling yourself to do the things which you do not wish to do.

Second: The obliteration of your following after the enjoyment of the sensation of pleasure in obedience to God's behests so that you are exclusively His, without any intermediary means of contact.

Third: The obliteration of the consciousness of having achieved the vision of God at the final stage of ecstasy when

God's victory over you is complete. At this stage you are obliterated and have eternal life with God and you exist only in the existence of God because you have been obliterated. Your physical being continues but your individuality has departed.

ANOTHER QUESTION

Know that there are three types of people, the man who seeks and searches, the man who reaches the door and stays there, the man who enters and remains.

As for him who seeks God, he goes towards Him guided by knowledge of the religious precepts and duties, concentrating on the performance of all external observances towards God.

As for the man who reaches the door and stays there, he finds his way there by means of his internal purity from which he derives his strength. He acts towards God with internal concentration.

As for the man who enters before God with his whole heart and remains before Him, excluding the vision of anything other than God, noting every indication from God to him, ready for whatever his Lord may command. This readiness is characteristic of the man who recognizes the Unity (Tawhid) of God.

ANOTHER QUESTION

Know that Tawhid is found in four stages in people. The first is the Tawhid of the ordinary people, next is the Tawhid of those who are well versed in formal religious knowledge. The other two stages are experienced by the elect who have esoteric knowledge (ma'rifa).

As for the Tawhid of ordinary people, it consists in the assertion of the Unity of God, in the disappearance of any conception of gods, opposites, equals, likenesses to God, but with the retention of hopes and fears in forces other than God. This type of Tawhid has a measure of efficacy since the assertion persists.

As for the Tawhid of those who are well versed in formal religious knowledge, it consists in the assertion of the Unity

of God, in the disappearance of any conception of gods, companions, opposites, equals, likenesses to God, combined with the performance of the positive commands and the avoidance of that which is forbidden so far as external action is concerned, all this being a result of their hopes, fears and desires; this type of Tawhid has a measure of efficacy since the assertion of the Unity of God is publicly proved.

As for the first type of esoteric Tawhid, it consists in the assertion of the Unity of God, the disappearance of the conception of the things referred to, combined with the performance of God's command externally and internally and the removal of hopes and fears in forces other than God, all resulting from the ideas which tally with awareness of God's presence with him, with God's call to him and his answer to God.

The second type of esoteric Tawhid consists in existence without individuality (Shabah) before God with no third person as intermediary between them, a figure over which His decrees pass according as He in His omnipotence determines, and that one should be sunk in the flooding seas of His unity, completely obliterated both from himself and from God's call to him and his answer to God. It is a stage where the devotee has achieved the true realization of the Oneness of God in true proximity to Him. He is lost to sense and action because God fulfils in Him what He hath willed of him. This implies that in his final state the worshipper returns to his first state, that he is as he was before he existed. The proof of this is the verse in the Qur'an:

" And when your Lord drew forth their descendants from the reins of the children of Adam and took them to witness concerning themselves, ' Am I not,' said He, ' your Lord ? ' They answered ' but certainly you are.'

Who existed (at this time) and how could he have existed before he had existence ? Did anyone answer other than the pure, and holy spirits in accordance with God's omnipotence and perfect will? His existence now is like it was before he had

existence. This, then, is the highest stage of the true realization of the Unity of God in which the worshipper who maintains this unity loses his individuality (dahab huwa).

The Last Question on TAWHID from the Discourse of JUNAYD
may God be pleased with him

Junayd was asked what was the final goal of the worship of those who have knowledge of God. He replied: " The conquest of themselves." He expounded that God has set out the tasks for those who perform their religious duties, so that they achieve a stage which is from God and have not recourse to themselves. God makes the prophets look at their elevation with longing. He prefers them to the saints, and the angels praise them when they have left behind their own achievements and achieve the state with God through God alone. The station of the rest of mankind before God is through their own achievements without that grace which God grants them. Thus it is that God requites every man, according to his status.

RULES OF CONDUCT FOR ONE WHO IS DEPENDENT UPON GOD

Shaykh Abu'l Qasim was asked concerning Rules of Conduct for one who is dependent upon God and he said:
" Thou shouldst be satisfied with God under all circumstances, and thou shouldst not ask anyone except God." He was asked concerning the thought of Goodness (Kathir) whether it is one thing or more and he said; " The thought which calls to obedience to God has three aspects (a) the thought which comes from the devil, the cause of which is the suggestion of the devil (Satan), and (b) the thought which comes from the lower soul, the cause of which is desire and the longing for comfort, and thirdly (c) the thought which comes from the divine, the cause of which is the assistance given by God." These thoughts may be confused one with another in the call to obedience to God, and one should clearly distinguish between them in order to perform right actions, because the prophet said: " For whom the gate of goodness is being

opened, let him seize it," and one must reject the other two (i.e. thoughts), (a) As for the devilish thought, God said: " Verily those who fear God, when a thought of evil from Satan assaults them, they bring God to remembrance, when, lo! they see (aright) " (Qu. 7. 200); (b) the thought of desire is the thought of the lower soul and, as the prophet said: " Hell is surrounded by desires."

Each one of these thoughts has a sign, by which it can be distinguished from another; as for the thought from the lower soul, the cause of which is desire and longing for ease, desire can be divided into the mental, such as the desire for advancement and reputation, the assuaging of anger by revenge, the humiliation of opponents and things of this kind, and physical, such as the desire for food, drink, and lust for women, clothes, pleasures and things of that kind. For the human soul there is a need for these delights, in accordance with its distance from one or another of them and the strength of the attraction which each class (or category) exercises on it.

For the thought which comes from the lower soul, there are two signs which act as true signs for distinguishing the thought with which it is concerned. One of them is the presence of this thought together with the need for one of these things that are desired, such as the presence of marriage (in the mind) together with a strong desire for women, deluding him in this point that his intention, was only to carry out the command of the prophet when he said: " Marry and be fruitful, I will multiply you on the day of resurrection " and in order not to transgress against the saying of the prophet " There are no monks in Islam"; and similarly in eating when there is a strong need for it, and sometimes it deludes you by calling upon you to abandon fasting or to acquire one of the desired things so that (the lower soul) says that, in keeping the fast, the mind is weakened from carrying out that which is obligatory for obedience to God; and that, if you invite a Muslim friend and you refrain from the desired good (in his presence), you make

the heart of a Muslim sad, or sadden the heart of your family if I" you bring food for your family (and you do not share in it). And sometimes the thought deceives you in another form by saying to you: "Destroy this desire by obtaining this hateful thing in order that this thought may not persist in you and your worship of God become confused." And similarly in other desires, there is delusion and deception. And likewise when you are weary in worship and you keep on in obedience to God against your will, then the lower soul will point out to you that the prophet prohibited celibacy and wearying oneself as he said " You are only obliged to do what you are able " and as he said " He who rides ceaselessly does not finish his journey nor does he keep his camel." Nay, sometimes when you have exercised great restraint your soul is very weary and is withheld from its desires, it calls you to destroy it completely or restrain it from performing its functions so that the lower soul causes you to do that which leads to execution or prison and things of this kind, because it is thought that in these two circumstances (i.e. destruction or restraint) there is ease and an end to weariness. One of the two signs in this matter is that sometimes tiredness and weariness come together with the longing for ease and sometimes the need for something which is desired comes together with the motive or impulse of the desire. Then one should consider these two conditions and if one of these two conditions comes (to the mind) you know that the thought is from the lower soul and its need moved it (the lower soul) to call for it. The conclusion (of this indication) is that the thought comes from desire or the seeking of ease and it is therefore apparent that the thought is from the lower soul. And the second sign is the persistence of this thought and its unceasing nature so that it becomes continuous and, whenever you make an effort to thrust it from you, it persists in you and insists so that there is no use seeking refuge or taking precautions or being warned or turning away from it, nay it persists continually and this is one of the clearest signs that (the thought) comes from

the lower soul. Just like the child, when he is kept back from something, the persistence of his longing for it is increased. These two conditions are true signs. When they are together, there is no doubt that the thought comes from the lower soul. And the cure for (the lower soul) in this case is either complete opposition to and remorseless tiring out of it (the lower soul) and prohibiting it from ease when the motive of the thought is over-tiredness and weariness in worship or the imposition upon the lower soul of a task so heavy that it will repress it from moving in accordance with this thought. And if the thought comes from desire, the cure for it is deprivation of the thing which the soul desires or restraining oneself from something else which it desires in order to restrain oneself from the object of one's desire.

As for the thought which comes from the devil, it also has two signs. One of them is the awakening of some of the needs of the lower soul at the call of desire, or the call of ease at times when the soul is accustomed to get that for which it longs. And the difference between it (the thought which comes from the devil) and the thought coming from the lower soul is that the latter persists and does not go while the former goes and comes again, so that whenever a man is diverted from his desire because of inadvertence, it persists in him when the devil reminds him of the desire and the motion of the soul by this reminder (from the devil) is greater than that of the thought which is from the lower soul because the latter is only a passing one at the time when the need is strongly felt.

And the second sign is that this thought which comes from the devil originates in and comes suddenly to a man's mind, but the thought which comes from the lower soul moves continuously by nature towards desire or ease and this is because the suggestion of the evil only follows the course of speech between man and man so that the only difference between this and that is that man does not see him (i.e. the devil) and the soul

can only move your heart through the sense of hearing at the time of speech or the utterance of sound, through the sense of sight at the time of making signs, through the sense of feeling at the time of touching. The devil (Satan) causes this through suggestion and touching the heart and passing through it. He (the devil) does not know that which is hidden, but he only comes to the lower soul through the characteristics which are normally virtue in the human being. And this is the difference between the thought which comes from the lower soul and that which comes from the devil.

As for the divine thought, it is indicated also by two signs, one of which, the most important, is the agreement of the Law with the thought and its (the Law's) testimony to the correctness of the thought. And the second sign is that at the beginning the soul is wearily reluctant to accept it until one finds a kind of allurement for it and this thought comes suddenly upon the lower soul without any preliminary steps like the thought which comes from the devil, but except for the fact that the lower soul is quicker in accepting the thought which comes from the devil (for the soul is readier to accept the devil's thought and lazier to accept the divine thought) because the devil comes to the lower soul only through its desires and relaxations, while the divine thought comes through the obligations, and the lower soul is in the habit of running away from obligations when they appear. This is the difference between this thought and the thought which comes from the devil and the thought which comes from the lower soul. And if a thought occurs to you, weigh it with these three weights and seek testimony as to every part of it according to the signs which we have indicated to you, so that the thoughts may be distinguished by you. Do with regard to the thoughts from the devil and the lower soul that which we have mentioned and repel them entirely and be ready to accept the divine thought, and lay aside preoccupation and waste of time, for time is short and conditions may change, and beware of the temptation of the

lower soul and the suggestion of the devil, for as one of the gates of goodness has been opened to him (the devil) you must close it entirely in front of him from the beginning. As an example, if a thought occurs to you concerning fasting for part of a month, which is laid down by the law as a voluntary duty, or keeping vigil for part of a night, and you may say to yourself: " Let me leave this for the present until I can complete a whole night or a full month," then this is a deceitful temptation from the devil to shut the door of divine assistance which is wide open. In fact, the gate of divine assistance has been opened, and you should seize the opportunity from the beginning.

The divine thoughts do not linger but quickly change to

Other thoughts and readiness to grasp the divine thought is a demand of the Law and in it (the readiness) there are two advantages. One of them is that one time is better than another time such as the times which we are told are favourable for God's forgiveness, and the times when God's mercy and pardon descend and the grace of God towards creatures is unlimited. And the second advantage is the training of the soul to be ready to carry out the commands of the Law and to obey God when blessing on work is to be hoped for. Moreover, there is the removal of the condition of slackness from the soul and this is readiness to put oneself in the condition to receive God's gifts of mercy and in this is an advantage also in the discipline of the soul to be ready to carry out the Law's commands. And God knows and decides.

This is the end of the rules of poverty from the sayings of Shaikh Abu'l Qasim al-Junayd may God sanctify his soul and illuminate his grave and Praise be to the Lord of the Worlds and the prayer of God be upon Muhammad and his family and his companions, all of them, and an abundance of peace upon them.